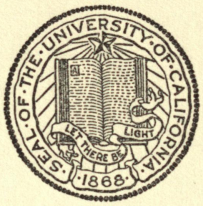
THE LOST HEIR

BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH



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THE LOST HEIR

CHAPTER I.

A WEDDING DAY.

It was an exceptional morning in that stern climate, and at that severe season—a splendid winter morning; as splendid as the sun, shining down from the clear, deep blue sky upon the snowclad hills, the frosted foliage and the frozen loch could make it; as splendid as if it had been especially made to order to grace the magnificent nuptials to be celebrated that day at Trosach Castle; as splendid, in one word, as the fortunes of the expectant bridegroom and the bride-elect; for on that day Alexander, Earl or Ornoch, was to wed Eglantine, Lady Linlithgow, the wealthiest heiress in all Scotland, and a baroness in her own right.

Trosach Castle was one of those ancient strongholds of the Western Highlands closely associated with the national history. It was built about half way up the ascent of Ben Trosach, at the head of Loch Trosach. It faced south, commanding the full length of the loch and sterile "inch," or isle, of the same name. In the rear the castle was shielded from the north winds by the higher steeps to the mountain, which was also thickly grown with a fir wood.

Trosach Castle had a great history. The very date of its first erection had been lost among the fables of antiquity. It had been a royal hunting lodge, tradition said, from the time of Malcolm I. Certainly it had been so for several reigns when, in the year 1170, it was bestowed by William the Lion on his favorite Eric, Baron of Shetland. Then it was transformed

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from a royal hunting lodge into a feudal castle. And in the centuries of civil war or feudal strife that followed, it was taken and retaken, destroyed and rebuilt, many times; but early in the present century, the period at which our story commences, it was still in the possession of a lineal descendant of the ancient lords of Shetland.

Ronald, Marquis of Shetland, had been distinguished in the councils of his country, a leading Tory in the House of Lords, an able diplomat at foreign courts, a wise colonial governor in India, where wisdom was of more value than was force of arms. But now he was retired from public affairs, and was living quietly at Trosach Castle.

He had married, early in life, a daughter of the ancient house of Murray, a handsome, haughty woman, who only needed temptation and opportunity to become cruel and wicked.

No children had blessed this long union, but their place was well filled in the hearts and home of the childless couple by the orphan niece and ward of the earl, the beautiful Eglantine Seton, Baroness of Linlithgow, in her own right.

The wardship of this young lady was a most important trust, involving a great responsibility.

Eglantine Seton's history and condition were very singular and intersting, for from the infrequency of marriage and the absence of children among her nearest kindred, she had been, from her very birth, presumptive heir of four great estates, situated severally in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. Before she had attained her twelfth year she had succeeded to, one after the other, all these rich estates, and thence she came to be called the "combination heiress." And before she had reached her fourteenth year, by the death of her father, the tenth and last baron, she became Baroness Linlithgow in her own right.

From her sunny home at Seton Court Eglantine was taken to the stern, dark castle on the hill, and an aged tutor provided for her in the person of the Rev. Mr. Graham, a retired clergyman.

For three years Eglantine lived a very lonely life at Trosach Castle, seeing only, beside the home circle, the members of four or five neighboring families.

Of these the most intimate at the castle were the Douglases of Inch Trosach, and the young Earl and the Dowager Countess of Ornoch, at Castle Ornoch, on the west bank of the loch.

The Dowager Countess of Ornoch was the elder sister of Lady Shetland, and, of course, the young earl was that lady's nephew. And if there was one person on earth whom Lady Shetland loved above all others, that person was her ladyship's nephew, the young Earl of Ornoch. He was poor. His title was one of the oldest in North Britain, but his estates were very heavily incumbered.

The colossal fortune of the "combination heiress," the youthful Baroness Linlithgow, was just what was needed to redeem the heavily-mortgaged patrimony of the young Earl of Ornoch. And an alliance between the parties would not only redeem the estates of the earldom, but add to it much wider possessions, if not higher honors, than it had ever enjoyed before.

This being the case, it was in the very nature of things that the two sisters, the Marchioness of Shetland and the Dowager Countess of Ornoch, should plan to unite in marriage the impoverished young earl and the wealthy young baroness.

To forward this plan, the young people were thrown very much together, and encouraged by every means to cultivate each other's friendship.

The earl, on his part, needed no prompting to seek Eglantine Seton's society. His was a case of first love, at first sight, for at their very first meeting, when Eglantine was but fifteen years of age, he had been at once attracted and delighted by her "glad eyes," had been drawn to his doom by their light, "as the moth by the lamp"—old simile, but ever true.

And Alexander, Earl of Ornoch, tall, finely formed, with a noble head and face, dark, curling hair and beard, and dark, speaking eyes, was quite handsome enough to win the heart of any maiden he might choose

to woo. He loved the youthful baroness, not for her rank or for her wealth, but for her "glad eyes," and he determined to woo her and win her if he could, that their light might shine on him to the end of his days.

And Eglantine? She loved Alexander, too, but only as it was her affectionate nature to love all with whom she lived and moved and had her being. She loved the dogs and horses, and the "gillies," each one, man or brute, with an individual and discriminating affection. She loved her ugly old master, who tormented her with Greek and Latin, Hebrew and theology. She loved her gouty and irritable old uncle, who snapped and snarled at her like a spiteful old Scotch terrier. She even loved her cold, stern aunt, whose strict discipline made her life a burden to her, and she loved all her neighbors.

But oh! how much more than these, than all, than any, she loved her nearest neighbor and earliest playmate, young Willie Douglas, the penniless nephew of old Dugald Douglas of Inch Trosach.

And here was the obstacle to their plans that neither Lady Shetland nor Lady Ornoch had ever dreamed of.

Just midway between the shores of the loch, and, consequently, just midway between the estates of Ornoch and Trosach Castle, stood the outward and visible sign of this unseen and unsuspected obstacle; Inch Trosach dividing the two estates which these ladies wished to join, no less certainly than young Willie Douglas divided their heirs.

That this boy and girl should love each other their most intimate friends would never have suspected. Certainly Willie Douglas was not manly enough, or even well-dressed enough, to be considered an object of danger to young ladies, or of dread to their guardians. He was not so handsome as the tall, elegant and graceful young Earl of Ornoch; his dress was homely, and often shabby; his uncle, old Dugald, was an impoverished gentleman, whose small estate, Inch Trosach, was not only almost sterile, but also heavily mortgaged, so that he could not supply his son the means of making a very genteel appearance. So, if Willie Douglas

was not desired as an eligible *parti* by dowagers who had marriageable daughters, neither was he dreaded as a dangerous one.

On the contrary, from his childhood up, every one who knew him had loved the gentle boy, and liked to have him run in and out of their houses, with any other household pet.

So how, then, would it ever occur to any one that poor Willie Douglas would ever become the rival of the splendid young Earl of Ornoch for the hand of Eglantine, Lady Linlithgow?

Yet there was something very attractive, almost angelic, in the expression of Willie's countenance, and perhaps it was that which won Eglantine's heart. Willie's form was slight and graceful, his features regular and delicate, his complexion fair and clear, his hair gold-hued and wavy, and his eyes were blue and pure. They were not "glad" eyes, like Eglantine's; they were sweet, serious, steady, intense eyes, that reached the very soul of her on whom they tenderly gazed. And this was the difference between those two pairs of eyes —hers attracted, his penetrated. And these young eyes had met, and these young souls, looking out from them, had blended in a love that was to be their fate. And all this had happened long before any one suspected so much as a passing interest between them.

And yet, so subtle and so pure was their affection that no word of love had been spoken; but all this while the youth felt sure that he should live a bachelor all his life for the love of Eglantine Seton, and all this while the maiden whispered to herself that so soon as she should become of age, she would bestow herself and all her rich inheritance on Willie Douglas, and on no other, even though that other were a prince.

Such was her silent plan of life, never uttered, but so familiar to her own imagination that she had deluded herself into the idea that every one else must know as well as herself what her future destiny was to be.

But when she was no more than seventeen years of

age, Eglantine Seton was rudely awakened from her love dream.

The Earl of Ornoch, who was full ten years her senior, being then twenty-seven years old, thought it was time for him to marry. And as he had known and loved the youthful baroness for two entire years, and had been much encouraged by her family as well as by his own, he made a formal visit to Trosach Castle, and asked permission of Lord Shetland to propose for the hand of his niece and ward. He received the marquis' consent to and hearty approval of his suit, and was referred to Eglantine herself for his ultimate answer.

With grateful acknowledgments he bowed, and went to seek the young lady in the music-room, where he had been told her should find her.

As he entered she arose from the piano, where she had been seated, and, with her usual courtesy, came forward to meet him.

But with very unusual gravity he greeted her, led her to a sofa, and seated himself beside her, and then and there he told her that he loved her, and that he had her uncle's permission to ask her to be his wife.

She opened her eyes and gazed at him in dumb amazement.

He repeated his words, and, with deferential tenderness, pressed the question.

The she opened her lips also, and politely but promptly declined the honor he had intended her.

It was now his turn to gaze in mute astonishment.

But she only lowered her eyes, and kept silence.

At length he found his voice, and spoke again:

"Eglantine, you cannot mean this. I come to you with the sanction of your guardian, as well as with the earnest wishes of my mother."

"I am very grateful. It is an honor, I know, and I am very sorry, but——" said the young girl, hesitating through the distress she felt in giving pain, "but I could not possibly accept your proposal, Lord Ornoch."

"Why? In the name of Heaven, why?" he inquired

in deep disappointment, yet with a degree of hopeful incredulity.

"Because I intend to——" She paused and dropped her eyes in some embarrassment.

"Intend to—what?" he pressed, after a painful silence.

"Oh, I thought you knew. You ought to have known."

"Known? I know nothing, understand nothing of all this, except that it makes me anxious and wretched. Explain yourself, dear Eglantine," he pleaded, taking her hand.

She withdrew it gently, saying, slowly:

"I had better tell you frankly, then, that, as soon as I become of age, I mean to marry Willie Douglas."

"Marry?" he echoed, in utter amazement. "Marry! Whom!"

"My own Willie Douglas. Yes," she answered, blushing intensely, yet speaking firmly, as in loyalty to young Douglas and justice to Lord Ornoch.

"Marry William Douglas! But, Lady Linlithgow, this is incomprehensible, impossible!" he exclaimed in great agitation, which he tried in vain to control. "You cannot be serious in what you say," he added, after a pause.

"I am perfectly serious. You have my answer, Lord Ornoch, my final answer, for I can never, never give you any other. And so I trust to your kindness and courtesy not to pursue this subject or prolong this interview, which is so distressing to us both," she answered, softly.

He arose at her word and stood before her. His face was very pale. He said:

"I will not trouble you further this morning, Eglantine. But—I cannot give you up! you whom I have loved since I first saw your sweet face; you whom I have been so long led to look upon as my future wife! No, I cannot, and will not resign hope."

He raised her hand to his lips, turned and left the room.

Great was the consternation of the two matchmaking

matrons when they heard of Lord Ornoch's rejection and its cause. They held a "cabinet meeting" and talked it over. Willie Douglas, the rival of the Earl of Ornoch? It was ridiculous! it was incredible! it was impossible! And yet they concluded that some decisive steps should be taken in the case.

Lady Shetland called up her niece for private examination, and in the course of a long *tête-à-tête* elicited from Eglantine, who had nothing to conceal, some very startling facts; that she had loved Willie Douglas ever since she could remember, and that she was fully resolved to marry him as soon as she should come of age and be her own mistress. This news was very exasperating, but it was somewhat palliated by what followed, for the lady drew from the maiden further information tha she was not formally pledged to her lover—that no explicit engagement had been entered into between them; that no proposal of marriage had been made by him, and that no word of love had ever been spoken by either to the other.

Lady Shetland heaved a deep sigh of relief. All was yet safe, she thought. Willie Douglas was an honorable young fellow, after all, to have refrained from binding Eglantine by an engagement when his temptation to do so had evidently been so strong. He was worthy of his ancient name and heroic lineage. And though she could not reward this beggar with the hand of the princess who loved him, yet she would do something else for him. And she immediately conceived a plan by which she could at once advance the fortunes of the young man and remove the obstacle from her way.

In the days when she had loved and petted the beautiful boy she had discovered that the very highest earthly aspiration of his spirit was to enter the army, an aspiration then as unlikely to be fulfilled as if it had been to enter the royal family.

But now Lady Shetland resolved that his ambition should be gratified, so she went to the marquis, her husband, and told him of Eglantine's rejection of Lord Ornoch, from an avowed preference for Willie Douglas, and of the imminent necessity of immediately getting

rid of young Douglas. Then she spoke of the youth's wish to enter the army, and proposed that the marquis should at once purchase for him a commission in a marching regiment, and so send him out of England for years, or forever.

Lord Shetland promptly perceived the wisdom of this plan, complimented his lady on her genius for diplomacy, and promised to set about the business at once.

That same day he sent a note to Willie Douglas, inviting him to the castle.

He received the youth, alone, in his library. Then, in the kindest manner, he spoke of his wish to advance the fortunes of his young friend, and, after a delicate little preamble, frankly offered to purchase for him a commission in the army.

Surprise, delight, gratitude nearly overwhelmed the sensitive and ingenuous boy. At first emotion deprived him of the power of speech, and afterward he was as sincere as he was earnest in the expression of his thanks.

The marquis affected to treat the matter lightly, and soon dismissed his overjoyed young "friend."

It happened that the family were about to go up to London for the season.

In a week from this time, therefore, the Marquis and Marchioness of Shetland, with their household, were established in their town house in Park lane. Lord Shetland lost no time in looking after Willie Douglas' commission.

Money and interest combined will do a great deal, if not everything; so, in a, comparatively speaking, very short time, William Douglas was gazetted as a lieutenant in the —— Regiment of Foot.

The regiment was ordered to Canada, but there was to be a delay of a few weeks before it sailed. And Willie Douglas had a month's leave before joining.

He ran home for a day or two to bid farewell to his old uncle at Inch Trosach, and then he returned to spend the rest of his leave in London, where he could be near Eglantine.

Every day he visited the house in Park lane, a seem-

ingly welcome guest, but really only a tolerated one.

"After all, it is no great matter," said Lady Shetland to Lady Ornoch, who, with the young earl, was also in town. "It can do no harm to let the little fools see as much of each other as they like during this one month of his leave, for when he is gone once, he will be gone forever."

And so the month drew near its close, and the time of parting came. And though their sorrowful goodbys were spoken in the presence of all the family, Eglantine forgot that she was a young lady, and that the eyes of others were on her, and she clung to her own Willie and cried bitterly; and, I am sorry to say, Lieutenant Douglas forgot that he was a man and a soldier, and cried for company. I fear that the girl of the period, in her elegant language, would have called him "a spoon," but as he afterward did some fierce fighting among the terrible Sepoys, I hope my readers will forgive him. He was now bound for Canada, however, and not for India. Still he wept to see his love weep, for the bravest are ever the tenderest. And she gathered courage from sorrow to lift her head from his shoulder and say:

"You are going from me, Willie! You may never live to return; but remember, Willie, in life or in death, I am yours."

He pressed her hands in speechless emotion.

As a breach of conventional propriety, all this was very shocking to Lady Shetland, but it was not in the least degree alarming.

"Pooh!" she said to herself, "all this is too open to be deep. They are children, and will forget each other in a half a year, or less time."

"Well, the boy officer was gone, and the "glad eyes" quenched their light in showers of tears.

Her aunt and uncle were as kind to Eglantine as it was in their unsympathetic natures to be. But her greatest comfort in her trouble was her old tutor. Sitting on a cushion at his feet, with her head on his knees, she would weep, complain and talk by the hour.

And he was always sympathetic, pitiful and patient with her.

His functions as tutor had ceased for some months past. He was very infirm, and somewhat childish. The marchioness had said that he was getting in his dotage, and talked of pensioning him off. But Eglantine pleaded for him, and so he was tolerated for a little, not as her tutor, but as her whim.

Eglantine was not yet brought out. Lady Shetland and Lady Ornoch had determined, from prudential motives, that she should not be until after her marriage with Lord Ornoch.

CHAPTER II.

EGLANTINE'S SECRET.

Thus, while the two elder ladies mixed freely in all the fashionable gayeties of the season, Eglantine remained at home, with no companion but her old tutor, and no visitor but Lord Ornoch.

He came almost every evening, often sacrificing an attractive ball or opera for the sake of—for the chance of—passing some hour *tête-à-tête* with Eglantine.

But, in one respect, all the plotters against the young girl's peace were disappointed.

Lord Ornoch reaped no sort of advantage from the exile of poor Willie, or the sequestration of Eglantine. Quite the contrary, indeed; for whereas, in former times, she had always been willing to receive the young earl as a friend and relative, now she avoided him on all occasions when she was not obliged by etiquette to entertain him.

When expostulated with upon this subject by her aunt, she would answer:

"If my poor, dear, banished Willie cannot have my company, such as it is, no gentleman shall."

"You talk as if you were betrothed, and yet you

assured me that you had not been," said the elder lady, sharply.

"And I told you the truth, aunt. And yet no one else can ever hope to have my hand. I can never be another man's bride," answered the young lady, with the courteous firmness peculiar to her manner.

The marchioness was provoked, more especially as the young earl was growing desperate. He urged his aunt to use more influence with her niece in his favor.

"You should know, Ornoch, that I shall do all that is possible to secure you this prize; you are my own nephew, while Eglantine is only my niece by marriage. But, in this enlightened age and country, no young lady can be coerced to marry. You must give her time. It is scarcely six weeks since she parted from her childhood's playmate, for Willie Douglas was nothing more. Give her time to get over her silliness, and then she will listen to reason. Attempt to hurry Eglantine and you will lose her; give her time and you will gain her."

"How much 'time?'" inquired the young earl, sarcastically.

The lady smiled.

"We'll say six more weeks, at the least," she answered.

But before three months had passed from the time Willie Douglas sailed for Canada terrible news came across the sea.

The Shetland family were still in town, although, as it was growing late in the season, they were talking of going to Scotland for the autumn.

They were at breakfast in the house in Park lane, Lady Shetland making a very good morning meal, as it was her hearty practice to do, Eglantine trifling with her teacup, and the marquis dividing his attention between his toast and his *Times,* when he suddenly let fall the paper, and exclaimed:

"Lord bless my soul alive!"

Lady Shetland looked up in mild surprise. She did not like exclamations, though she was to be favored with a few of them just now.

"Young Douglas!" again exclaimed the marquis.

"What of him?" coolly inquired the marchioness.

"Ah, poor fellow! Dead!"

"'Dead?'"

"Dead as Julius Cæsar! Killed!"

"'Killed?'"

"Killed! Ay, killed! A horrible country! But, good Lord! look at Eglantine!" cried the old man, suddenly breaking off.

The lady turned her head.

Without a cry, without a groan, Eglantine had sunk to the floor, where she now lay like a corpse.

Lady Shetland touched the bell, and then stooped and unloosened the corsage of the fainting girl, while the marquis stood over them, looking on.

"Send Lady Linlithgow's maid here," said the marchioness to the footman who answered the bell.

The man disappeared, and was soon replaced by a middle-aged Highland woman, Elspeth Comyns by name, who had been Eglantine's nurse in infancy, and had followed her from Seton Court to Trosach Castle, and afterward to London, as her sole attendant. Of late the marchioness had suggested that plain, elderly Elspeth Comyns should be replaced by a younger and smarter maid; but Eglantine declined to part with her old nurse as persistently as she had pleaded for the retention of her old tutor.

"Eglantine's fancy for dotards amounts to a monomania," had been Lady Shetland's remarks upon those occasions.

Elspeth Comyns, on entering the breakfast-room, and seeing the condition of her young lady, ran to her side, crying:

"My bairn! my bairn! my bonny bairn!"

"Be quiet, Comyns. Lift Lady Linlithgow in your arms, and lay her on the sofa," said the marchioness.

Elspeth, as able-bodied a woman as ever came from the Highlands, lifted the light form of the young lady and laid her on the couch.

All the remedies suggested by experience were promptly used for the restoration of the fainting girl.

But she recovered her consciousness only to fall into alarming convulsions.

"My lady, we had just better take her to her ain chamber. She'll be muckle better off there," said the Scotch woman.

"I think you are right, Comyns. Can you carry her?"

"Ou, aye! Why no? I've carried her often eneuch," replied Elspeth, once more lifting the young lady.

So Eglantine was borne off to her own room and undressed and put to bed.

"Please, my lady, and you'll leave my bairn to myself. I'se bring her round suner than anither could," pleaded the old nurse.

"You are right again. You understand her constitution better than any of us," graciously answered the lady, well pleased to be rid of an unpleasing duty, and also curious to learn particulars as to the fate of young William Douglas.

She returned to the breakfast-room, where she found the marquis slowly pacing the floor.

"How is she now?" he quickly inquired.

"She is in good hands. But what is this about young Douglas? Not killed, really?"

"Really killed. I told you so before," replied the marquis, reseating himself and taking up the *Times*.

"But how? when?" inquired the marchioness, resuming her seat, and ringing for more hot tea.

"Let me see," pondered the old man, looking over the columns of the paper. "Here it is—letter from Toronto. Too long to read over again. Can look at it for yourself after breakfast."

"But tell me something about it. How did it happen? a duel?"

"Duel! No, duels are obsolete. No; adventure! that should be obsolete, too. No, the young fool got leave, joined a party of young officers on a visit to the States; went out with them to the Western plains to hunt buffalo; got hunted themselves by a hostile tribe of Blackfoot Indians; made a stand and gave battle; and, as one might judge, were cut to pieces."

"All of them?"

"All except one, who, being mounted on a very strong and swift horse, escaped, and finally succeeded in reaching Fort—Fort——" The marquis hesitated, and referred to his paper.

"Never mind the name of the fort. Tell me if this is a certainty, and not a mere newspaper report."

"A certainty? Why, it is from the special correspondent."

"And young Douglas was undoubtedly killed?"

"Massacred! hacked to pieces! after the manner in which those wretches do their work!" growled the marquis.

"Poor young man. Hand me the paper, if you please. You seem to have done with it."

And the lady having finished her breakfast and obtained the paper, commenced the perusal of the Toronto letter.

But it was many days before the young Lady Linlithgow learned all the particulars of her lover's tragic death.

She kept her room, refusing all company, repelling all sympathy, turning away from food and drink, weeping almost incessantly.

She was constantly attended by her faithful Elspeth, and daily visited by her uncle and her aunt, who urged upon her notice dainties to tempt her appetite and books to divert her mind.

All in vain! She turned from all these things and gave herself up to that "sorrow which is without hope."

She had secluded herself in this manner for more than a week, when an event occurred that forced her out. This was the sudden and fatal illness of her beloved old tutor.

Eglantine went at once to visit him in his little room, and thenceforth seldom left his bedside.

On the third day after his first attack, while Eglantine sat on his right side and Elspeth sat on his left, both chafing his almost lifeless hands, and while the professional nurse was engaged at the opposite end of the room, he made a sign for Eglantine to bend

down her ear to his lips, and then he whispered to her:

"My child, you must tell them."

That low but penetrating whisper, intended only for Eglantine, was distinctly heard by Elspeth, who, in a vague misgiving, roused herself up to listen. But she heard no more.

The old man's life was ebbing fast. With a lost effort he lifted his venerable hands and laid them on his pupil's head and blessed her, and, with that blessing on his lips, he passed away.

The illness and death of her old tutor had had its wholesome effect in rousing Eglantine. But after the funeral was over, she became very quiet. She ceased to speak of her lost love, and almost cased to weep for him. Her aunt and uncle seemed kinder than ever, and old Elspeth more devoted.

Some weeks passed, during which Lord Ornoch, advised and assisted by Lady Shetland, made good progress in Eglantine's favor.

At length an event occurred that rendered it expedient for him to hasten his marriage. He had received the appointment as ambassador to the court of Vienna. He was expected to depart in a few weeks. He therefore sought an interview with Lady Shetland, to ascertain from her whether it would not be possible to overcome the reluctance of Eglantine, and induce her to accept his hand at once, so as to enable him to take her as his bride to Vienna.

Lady Shetland looked very grave over the proposal.

"It has been so very short a time since the death of her childhood's companion that she has scarcely ceased to grieve for him. But leave everything entirely in my hands, and I will endeavor to accomplish your wishes."

"I will very gladly and gratefully do so, my dear madam," answered the young earl, gallantly lifting the hand of the lady to his lips and bowing over it as he took his leave.

Lady Shetland took an opportunity the same afternoon to broach the subject to Eglantine.

But not inthe first trial, nor yet in the second or

third, could Lady Shetland succeed in gaining her niece's consent to become the wife of her nephew. But the lady could be patient and persevering, and patience and perseverance usually win the day.

Again and again she renewed her attacks.

What could a girl of seventeen do against all these influences brought to bear upon her?

Besides, Eglantine was very miserable and moody. She had moods of tenderness, in which she would feel so softened as to be almost willing to yield to her friends' entreaties; mods of despair, in which she felt utterly indifferent to her own fate, and would as willingly marry as die; moods of recklessness, in which she felt impelled to rush into any change of life or scene of excitement that could distract her mind from the dull, perpetual aching of her heart.

And Lady Shetland watched her through all these moods, and took advantage of each one to urge the arguments that especially suited it.

And so, at lentgh, she gained her object, and won Eglantine's consent to become the wife of Lord Ornoch.

As the day and hour of her marriage drew near, Eglantine's nervousness almost amounted to mania. And on the night before the wedding morning she was nearly wild with excitement. She never closed her eyes in slumber, or even reposed her frame upon the bed. She passed the night in pacing up and down the whole length of her bedroom and dressing-room, moaning and wringing her hands, or in crouching down upon some low seat, with her head buried in her lap, as if overwhelmed with the weight of some insupportable shame or fear.

Vainly old Elspeth tried to soothe her, or to win her confidence. The wretched girl repelled all her nurse's caresses, and kept a stony silence, until at length Elspeth, much alarmed, declared that she would go and call Lady Shetland.

Then, indeed, Eglantine started up, flew past her, locked the door, withdrew the key, turned, and, with a pale, defiant face and flaming glance, confronted her nurse.

"Cail no one!" she said, "unless you wish to see me die before you! Look!" she cried, drawing a small vial from her bosom. "I have carried this about me for a week past, wishing to drink it and sleep forever, but wanting the courage to commit such a sin! But make another move toward alarming the house, and, as I live, I will——"

"Oh, my bairn! my bairn!" cried the nurse, plucking at her own gray hair. "Pit doon the deadly drug! I will na fash ye wi' onything ye dinna like! Pit doon the fearsome stuff! And if ye would but tell me the trouble that's on your mind——"

Eglantine's only answer was to throw herself down on the sofa and give way to a passion of sobs and tears. They were the first she had shed for several days, and they relieved her terrible excitement.

Old Elspeth knelt down beside her and patiently watched her.

All was very quiet in the room, but beyond there was talk and song and laughter. When the sound of this revelry came, faintly borne upon the air, Eglantine stirred and shuddered. And by those motions only Elspeth knew that she was not asleep.

At length the light steps of the retiring guests were heard along the passages, and the whole house grew still.

Thus passed that dreadful night.

The wedding day dawned clear, cold and as bright as ice, snow and sunshine could make it. All was winter and frost without; but all was summer and warmth within the castle.

The family and their guests were early astir and at their dressing-tables.

Elspeth, who had kept up the wood fire all night, now replenished it with fresh logs, and then went and opened the window shutters, letting in the dazzling light of that resplendent winter morning. Then she arranged the dressing-table for her young mistress' bridal toilet.

Eglantine was very quiet now, but her quietness was even more alarming than her excitement had been, for

it seemed the quietness of stupor. She made no opposition when Elspeth proposed to ring for the French maid, who was to dress her for the altar. She sat in a large resting chair before the fire, with her feet upon a footstool and her eyes staring down upon her folded hands. She was very pale but for a circumscribed crimson spot that flickered in and out, like a smoldering fire, on either cheek.

At length there came a light tap at the door. Elspeth opened it and admitted Ma'am'selle Felicie, the French dressing maid, who courtesied to her unconscious lady, and then opened the wardrobe set apart for the bridal toilet, and began to lay out the various articles of dress.

"Come, my bairnie," whispered the Scotch nurse, taking Eglantine's unresisting hand and leading her to the chair before the dressing-glass.

Eglantine sat down like one acting in a dream, in seeming unconsciousness of all that was passing around her.

The French maid was struck with astonishment at the appearance and deportment of her new lady, but after the first involuntary elevation of her eyebrows, she was too polite to betray any surprise.

"Will mademoiselle that I shall commence her toilet now?" she respectfully inquired.

Receiving no answer, she took silence for consent, and entered upon her pleasing task, assisted by Elspeth. And while Felicie combed and dressed the beautiful bronze brown hair, Elspeth encased the dainty feet in delicate satin boots.

Eglantine submitted to the whole process apathetically, unconsciously.

Her bridal toilet, when complete, was very magnificent. She wore a rich white velvet dress, with a long train, and trimming of white chenille fringe, headed with white satin folds; a rich old cardinal point lace veil, worth a principality; a wreath of orange flowers, sprinkled with small diamonds, for dewdrops; earrings, brooch, necklace and bracelets of rare oriental pearls. Lastly Felicie slipped on the little hands the dainty gloves, placed in the slender fingers the fragrant

bouquet, then tilted the large mirror downward a little, and said:

"Will mademoiselle condescend to look and see the effect?"

Eglantine unconsciously yielded to the impulse lent her, lifted her languid eyes and looked into the mirror.

But if the fabled Gorgon's head had suddenly met her sight, she could not have looked more aghast. Her eyes opened and widened with a stare of terror and horror; her face blanched, her lips parted, and like a sleep-walker aroused to consciousness upon the brink of an awful precipice, she threw up her hands with a piercing shriek, and fell back in her chair.

The French maid, with a little answering scream, seized a smelling-bottle and applied it to her lady's nose.

But Elspeth, with the authority of an old nurse, came and put the new maid aside, saying quietly:

"You may gang your ways, my lass, and leave my bairnie wi' me. She's no been weel the night. Gae awa' wi' ye noo, lass."

Thus urged, the Frenchwoman left the room.

Elspeth crept after her and cautiously locked the door, and then returned to the side of her young lady.

Eglantine was drooping with her head bowed down upon her hands over the arm of her chair.

Old Elspeth knelt beside her, drew her head upon her own bosom, and whispered coaxingly:

"Noo, my bairnie, ye ken ye maun tell auld Elspeth all your trouble."

"Oh, Elspeth! Oh, nurse! help me! take me away from here! kill me! save me!" cried Eglantine, wildly, incoherently.

"'Kill you?' 'save you?' my bairnie, are ye daft?"

"Oh, Elspeth! I am a lost and ruined wretch! but I didn't mean it. I didn't know it! I am not sure of it even yet! but I'm afraid! I'm afraid! Oh, Elspeth, help me to run away!"

"To rin awa'! My bairn, my bairn! I can mak' naething of this! Ye maun tell your auld nurse all

about it! And dinna ye fear to do sae; for I luve ye, my childie! I luve ye weel!" pleaded the old woman.

"Oh, Elspeth, since my dear mother died you have been the only mother I have known. You will not forsake me, Elspeth, no matter what I tell you? no matter what may happen to me?" prayed Eglantine, lifting her head and clasping her hands.

"Whisth, bairnie! I couldna if I would. My saul cleaves to ye, by bairnie, and will suner leave its ain bodie than its bairnie," murmured the nurse, repressing all her own great anxiety, and seeking to soothe her "childie."

"Elspeth, sit down and take me in your lap, like you used to do when I was a babe, and then I'll try to tell you," said Eglantine, as she tottered to her feet and dropped her bridal veil and wreath.

Elspeth complied with the childish request.

And then Eglantine, with her arms around her nurse's neck, and her face hidden on her nurse's bosom, sobbed forth a confession that turned that woman's ruddy cheeks white with horror and amazement.

CHAPTER III.

EGLANTINE'S CONFESSION.

A long silence followed the dreadful revelation. At length the sobbing girl broke forth wildly:

"Oh, Elspeth! Elspeth! Speak to me! Reproach me! Do anything but keep so mute and still!"

"I'm just considering, bairnie, what maun be dune," answered the nurse, in a low voice.

"Oh, Elspeth! Elspeth! You said you wouldn't forsake me! I know it was a great sin, but you said you wouldn't forsake me!"

"It was nae sin, bairnie, nae sin at a,' but muckle folly; for noo, ye ken, ye canna marry the Airl, nor onybody else. Pity ye troth-plighted yoursel' to him."

Just at that moment some one knocked, and then tried the latch and pushed the door.

Elspeth inquired who was there.

Lady Shetland, superbly dressed in a dark blue Lyons velvet, camel's hair shawl, and point lace cape, sailed into the room, inquiring:

"Ready, Eglantine, love? All are waiting—why, what is all this?" she exclaimed, as her eyes fell upon the crumpled veil and crushed wreath that lay in a heap on the carpet, and on the disordered dress, tumbled hair and tear-stained face of the bride.

Eglantine, overpowered with shame and fear, sank to the floor and buried her face in the cushions of the chair.

"Elpseth! what is the meaning of all this?" sternly demanded the marchioness, turning to the nurse.

"Ou, me leddy! it's nae her fau't, but she canna wed the Airl," sighed the trembling woman.

"What insolent nonsense is this? Are you mad or tipsy, pray?" severely demanded the lady.

Before the frightened nurse could answer, Eglantine arose and stood like a ghost before the marchioness.

"Aunt Shetland," she murmured, in a faint tone, "she tells you the truth. I cannot wed the earl, because I am not fit to be his bride!"

The lady sank down in her chair, and looked from her niece to the nurse.

"Dinna be hard on her, my lady. Dinna be hard on her. She is but a bairn," pleaded Elspeth.

"Leave the room, woman! Go! I will talk to my niece," said Lady Shetland, imperiously pointing to the door.

"Pit your trust in the Laird, bairnie, and dinna be fasht. Think o' them that watch ye fra heaven, bairnie, and do the right!" said the nurse, as she passed her young charge and left the room.

"Now, then!" said the lady, bending her cold, severe looks upon her niece.

Eglantine sank at her feet, and, pale with terror, faltered forth:

"Oh, Aunt Shetland, have pity on me, for I am a very wretched girl!"

"Be plain," pitilessly commanded the lady.

"I am—I am—I am poor, dear, dead Willie's widow!" wept Eglantine, and as she made this confession, she crouched lower, and hid her face in her hands.

"So!" said the marchioness, in a hard, cold, cruel tone. "When was this dishonor consummated?"

"We were married while we were in London, three weeks before Willie went away. Oh, Auntie! pardon me! pardon me! we could not help it! We loved each other so much! And Willie was going away so far! to stay so long! He didn't doubt my love, poor Willie! but he did doubt my strength. He did dread that I might be overruled and made to marry the earl, in his absence. And so——"

"He beguiled you into a marriage with himself!" hissed the lady between her closed teeth.

"Oh, no, no, no! poor Willie! It was not his fault; it was mine. I told him that I also doubted my strength to resist my guardian's will; that I also feared I might be compelled to marry Lord Ornoch. And so, that I might keep true to him, I offered to marry Willie Douglas then, and to put it forever out of my power to be false."

"And so you were married?"

Eglantine nodded and sobbed.

"Or you thought you were, which is a very different thing. Who dared help you in this disobedience? Who dared to perform this illegal ceremony? Whoever it was committed a grave misdemeanor, for which he shall be held to a severe account. The law——"

"Aunt Shetland," said Eglantine, sadly and gravely, and recovering something of composure, "he who joined our hands is beyond the injustice of the law."

"Run away to America, I suppose, well paid for his part in this felony."

"Aunt Shetland, he is dead. Our old tutor, the Rev. Mr. Graham, it was, whom we prayed to aid us. He took pity on us, and performed the ceremony."

"Where was this done, and when, did you say?"

"In my old tutor's own room, in London, last summer, just three weeks before Willie went away."

"Ah!" commented the marchioness, in a tone and with a look almost devilish in their cold and cruel malignity—"Ah! and so the depravity of a boy, the levity of a girl and the imbecility of a retired clergyman have combined to bring deep disgrace upon an old family never dishonored till now."

"Disgrace!" echoed the young girl, shrinking back appalled and aghast.

"Yes, disgrace!" repeated the lady, ruthlessly. "You call yourself the widow of William Douglas. You are no such respectable person. You could not be his widow, for you have never even been his wife. You are but a lost and ruined creature whose very presence pollutes the house that shelters you."

With a sharp cry Eglantine sank down with her face to the feet of the old lady, who spurned her away, and cruelly continued:

"That wicked and foolish form of marriage between you and your lover was not worth a straw. You and your partner in sin and folly were both minors, and could not have been lawfully married in England, without the consent of your guardians. That miserable old idiot, your tutor, must have remembered this fact, had he not been, as he was, in his dotage. You see now to what your disobedience has reduced you."

"Oh, my mother! Oh, my mother!" moaned the humbled and heartbroken girl, covering her face with her hands, and rocking her form backward and forward, "Oh, my mother, look down from heaven in pity on your poor child."

"How dare you breathe your mother's name? She was an honorable and honored matron. And now tell me, Lady Linlithgow, knowing yourself to be what you are, how could you presume to accept the marriage proposals of the Earl of Ornoch?" inquired the marchioness, with cold malignity.

"I didn't know," wept the poor child. "I thought I had been lawfully married! I am sure I meant to have been, and so did Willie. An dso did my old tutor,"

she added, a little incoherently. "And when my poor, dear, dear Willie was killed, I felt as if his death was a judgment on me for my disobedience."

"And so of course it was. But go on. Tell me how, knowing what you knew, you dared to accept the proposals of Lord Ornoch?"

"I didn't wish to do so. Heaven knows I did not! But you all urged me so. I thought I was a widow, indeed I did. I thought it was my duty to make what reparation I could for my fatal disobedience, and to give up my own will to yours. I did wish to confess my marriage."

"Your marriage!" sneered the lady, with ineffable scorn.

"But I was afraid to do so, indeed I was, Aunt Shetland. O, pardon me! Spare me! I have no one but you, aunt," she pleaded, pathetically, clinging to the skirts of the lady.

"Keep your hands from my dress, you wretched creature! And never dare to call me 'aunt' again. But now tell me at once, what motive has moved you, at this late moment, to make this shameful confession?"

"Oh, Aunt Shetland——"

"Again!"

"I beg your pardon! I forgot. Oh, Lady Shetland, I was so ignorant. I did not know till very lately. But now I have found out something. Before this week I did not dream of such a misfortune; but this week I thought—I feared; but still I was not sure—not sure until this morning, when I told Elspeth all about it, and then I asked her if it was so, and she told me, 'Yes, it was,'" sobbed Eglantine.

"What an incoherent mass of folly and wickedness you have uttered! What do you mean? What is it you feared, but did not know until to-day? What has Elspeth told you?"

"Oh, aunt—I beg your pardon—Lady Shetland, can you not—not surmise——"

"I can guess no shameful secrets! You must tell me," said the lady, vindictively.

"Oh, madam, I have been a wife, or thought myself

one, and—and—oh, pity me! I canont tell you; pity me!" prayed the girl, groveling at the feet of her relentless judge.

"I will pity you so much as this, that within an hour your intended bridegroom shall hear of your fall, and within a day this house shall be rid of your presence," replied the lady, in a hard, grating, bitter tone, as she spurned the kneeling form with her foot, and arose to leave the room.

"And hark you, Lady Linlithgow," she added, sneeringly, "you are still a minor, still a ward. And you will understand that you are a prisoner in this apartment, forbidden to speak to any one except myself, or such domestic as I shall appoint to attend you, while you remain in this house."

If this last thrust was meant to wound, it missed its mark. Poor Eglantine was but too well satisfied to be left alone, and relieved from the pain of seeing any one.

The marchioness arose and left the chamber.

At the door she met a bevy of bridesmaids beautifully dressed, who had come, by the previous arrangement to "report" for their graceful duty.

"Go away, my loves. Lady Linlithgow is ill, very ill, too ill to see you," said the marchioness, closing and locking the chamber door after her, and then facing the frightened maidens.

"Ill!" echoed two or three in a breath.

"My dears, quiet yourselves and attend to me. Lady Linlithgow is extremely ill. She has been ailing for a week past, but we thought nothing of her indisposition. Last night, however, her malady declared itself to be a fever. This morning she is dangerously ill. The fever may be fatal, may be contagious; we cannot tell until the doctor comes."

"Good Heavens, how shocking! Fever! contagion!" echoed the terrified girls, preparing to disperse to their own rooms.

Lady Shetland meanwhile passed down the hall, and descended the stairs. She went into the library, where she knew she would find the marquis.

He was walking restlessly up and down the floor, but

stopped and turned around to face his wife as she entered.

"Is not Eglantine ready yet? Everybody else is kept waiting. It is high time we were in the chapel. We shall have scarcely half an hour for the breakfast. And even then they may miss the train," he said, impatiently.

"Sit down, my lord; I have something to tell you," said the marchioness, locking the library door to prevent interruption, seating herself on the sofa, and signaling the marquis to follow her example.

"Sit down! Lord bless my soul alive! there is no time for sitting. We should be in the chapel now."

"My lord, we shall not go to the chapel."

"Eh?"

"Eglantine is ill, seriously—dangerously—it may be fatally so. The marriage ceremony cannot be performed to-day," said the marchioness, decisively.

"Eh?" exclaimed the marquis, staring incredulously.

"The marriage cannot go on to-day. Eglantine is too ill to leave her room."

"What ails the girl?"

"A fever of some sort—a contagious fever, as likely as not! She has been sickening for it all the week, as you may have seen, although we made light of it. Now she is extremely ill."

"What the devil is to be done?—and the house full of wedding guests!" exclaimed the marquis, seizing his own gray hair.

"That is what I came to talk about. You must go into the drawing-room, and announce the illness of the bride-elect, and the consequent postponement of the marriage, and make our excuses to our guests as best you may!"

CHAPTER IV.

DARK DOINGS.

It was late in the short winter afternoon when Lady Shetland unlocked the door and entered the chamber of Eglantine.

She found the poor girl ill, really ill, so ill as to redeem from all prevarications the assertions and explanations offered by her aunt to her family and friends.

She was still lying on the carpet, where she had sunk down hours before. She was shaking as with an ague fit, and her hands and feet were as cold as ice, while yet her face was deeply flushed and her eyes wildly bright as with inward fever.

Lady Shetland sharply rang the bell, that quickly brought Elspeth to the room.

"Raise your young lady, undress her and put her to bed," was the prompt order given by the marchioness to the attendant.

"Ou, wae's ma, my leddy!" cried Elspeth, as she kneeled down beside her charge. "She's unco ill! Hadna we better send for the doctor at once?"

"No," curtly answered the marchioness.

"Nay, my leddy, ye maun pardon me, but I think——"

"You are not to think, but to obey. Put your young lady comfortably to bed," sternly repeated the marchioness.

Poor Elspeth obeyed orders so far as to disrobe her "bairn" and lay her in her luxurious nest; but as to putting her comfortably anywhere, that was impossible.

Eglantine lay, with flushed cheeks and parched lips, rolling her eyes and tossing her arms in wild delirium.

"Deed, my leddy, the doctor maun be fetched," pleaded Elspeth.

"Hold your impertinent tongue, or leave the room," commanded the lady.

"But ou, waes me, me leddy," persisted Elspeth, frightened, but resolute, "an' she was to dee?"

"It would be the best thing that she could do, I

think," sharply answered Lady Shetland. "And now, hush or go."

Poor Elspeth preferred to "hush." She got some cold water in a bowl and a bit of fine sponge and sat down by the bedside and began to bathe the burning brow of her unfortunate charge.

Lady Shetland sat down on the other side of the bed to watch and to think. Eglantine was quite as bad as Elspeth had declared her to be. She might die. And, though Lady Shetland had declared in her anger that "it would be the best thing she could do," and though it might be so, for Eglantine's own peace, yet it certainly would not be so for her relations' interests.

If the girl were to die now, her colossal fortune would be lost to Lord Ornoch. If she were to die also without medical attendance, a great reproach for unpardonable neglect, if nothing worse, would fall upon her guardians.

When Lady Shetland had talked of calling in Dr. McGill, she had really no intention of doing so; for she could not even have known, then, that Eglantine would need his services. Even when she found the unhappy girl in the delirium of high fever, and when old Elspeth proposed to send for the doctor, her own first impulse, promptly acted upon, had been to refuse.

Now, however, as she sat and watched the wildly tossing form and rolling eyes of the fevered and delirious girl, she grew terrified as she perceived that medical aid was here indispensable.

She must call in a doctor, but not McGill. He belonged to the neighborhood. He was the greatest gossip living. He would, in attending Eglantine, find out the fatal secret. And, though bound by his professional oath to respect the secrets of families, his love of tattle would inevitably lead him to let this one leak out, little by little, until all the worst should be known or surmised. No, not McGill.

Who then? There was no other doctor within twenty miles. But stop; yes, there was Dr. Seton. He lived fifteen miles away, at the village of Seton, which was five miles this side of Eglantine's estate of Seton Court.

Dr. Seton certainly. He was the very man.

But who and what was Dr. Seton, besides being the medical practitioner at the village of Seton?

Reader, every family, however noble, or even princely, has its following or poor relations—some "poor, but honest;" some others "poor, but"—otherwise than honest. To which set Dr. David Seton belonged you will soon discover. He was a distant relation to the Setons of Linlithgow—so distant that no one on earth but a Scotchman could have traced out the relationship. He had been born and brought up in the village of Seton; had studied medicine and obtained his diploma in the city of Edinburgh, and had returned to commence practice in his native place. He was a learned and skillful physician, and could have done better in a larger town, no doubt; but then he was a "Seton," and in the village of Seton he was regarded with all the honor that accrued to the old name.

Like most of us, he was a mixture of good and evil. One of his good elements was his loyalty to "the head of his house," as he always termed the one Seton who happened to be Baron Linlithgow. Now, however, the "head of his house" happened to be a "she-chief" and a Baroness Linlithgow. The barony had fallen to the distaff! but the loyalty of David Seton had not fallen anywhere. He revered the young baroness as he had revered the baron her father and all the barons her forefathers. Also he had known and attended Eglantine in her infancy and childhood, before the great calamity of her father's early death had made her a baroness in her own right. And now he would keep her secrets, from personal regard, from family pride, as well as from professional integrity.

Yes; David Seton was the man to call in. He had never attended the family at Trosach Castle; but the marchioness knew that he would feel only too much honored to be invited to do so.

So Dr. Seton was sent for, and answered promptly.

He "considered the case serious," as he expressed it, and deemed it expedient to place his own practice in the hands of his assistant, Mr. Christopher Kinloch, in

order that he might devote all his energies to his new patient.

In the course of the next few days certain dark suspicions crossed the doctor's mind, but they were put aside as too horrible to be entertained. The doctor watched his patient, and Lady Shetland watched him. She soon saw that he suspected the condition of Eglantine—that he was heavily oppressed with the weight of the secret, and deeply exercised on the subject of his own responsibility. Whenever she made particular inquiries about his patient he became very much agitated. Lady Shetland almost enjoyed his mental agonies.

At length it seemed that the doctor had screwed his "courage to the sticking place," and resolved to do his dreadful duty, and make that fatal revelation to Lady Shetland, which he could not know would be no new revelation at all to her. He solemnly wrote a note requesting an interview with Lady Shetland upon very important affairs.

The marchioness, who knew what was coming, sent him a verbal message to come to her in the library, whither she went to meet him.

He soon came in.

"My lady," he said, as he stood before her, trembling with emotion, "I have a most agonizing duty to do——"

"Sit down, Dr. Seton," said the marchioness, pointing to a chair.

He was scarcely able to stand, so he sank into the offered seat.

"Now compose yourself, and explain your meaning."

"Madame, I have that to tell you which, had one risen from the dead to tell me, I would not have believed it. Nay, had an angel come down from heaven to tell me, I would not have believed it, Lady Shetland. How shall I tell you the treadful discovery I have made?"

"You need not tell me at all. I know all about it," coolly remarked the lady.

The doctor looked up surprised and incredulous. He could not believe that she knew what he meant.

"You mean that there is likely to be a blot on the stainless escutcheon of the Setons," she added.

The doctor looked shocked that she should speak of this so coolly; his red face flushed to a deeper red; but then he remembered that Lady Shetland was not a Seton, and he answered, slowly:

"You know this, then, madam?"

"I have known it for some time; I was only curious to see how long it would take you to discover it. Now you understand why it was that I troubled you to come so far, instead of calling in McGill, who is close by. I knew we could trust you; I knew your deep regard for the family honor——"

"'The family honor?' The family honor is gane," said the doctor, falling into the dialect, as was usual with him when deeply touched—"gane, gane, gane! rent to bits by the lightness of a lass."

"I don't think you will say so when you hear all," said the lady.

The doctor lifted his head with a look of forlorn hope in his eyes.

The marchioness then told him the whole sorrowful story of Eglantine's concealed marriage and calamitous widowhood.

"Thank heaven! I'm glad it was na worse," said the doctor, with a sigh of infinite relief.

"Worse? I scarcely know how it could have been worse for her. The marriage was illegal," said the lady.

"Sae it was—sae it was! But the lassie meant weel. She was nae light o' luve. I'm glad ye didna call in Sandy McGill. He's a leaky vessel. And nae use to expose family secrets even to your family doctor, when ye hae a doctor in the family.

Lady Shetland winced. She felt no disposition to include this country practitioner, this far-off cousin of the Setons of Linlithgow, in her family circle; but she felt that she must not offend him, and so she did not repel his claim.

"Our greatest difficulty will be——" she began; and then she hesitated, too much embarrassed by the sub-

ject to explain herself even to this old doctor, who claimed her confidence as a member of the family.

He came quickly to her aid by saying:

"Yes, yes, your ladyship, I ken. I comprehend. The affair maun be kept still amang oursel's; and the babe, if it comes alive into the world, maun be secretly provided for."

"Yes."

"I think I can pit my hand on the woman that will answer our purpose—for a price."

"Offer her any price! Come, I will put a thousand pounds in your hands to use as you deem best, so that the secret is well kept."

"Trust to me, your ladyship. All shall be in train for the coming event."

"And remember, Dr. Seton, there is no one but yourself, myself, Eglantine and Nurse Elspeth that even suspects this secret."

"And no one shall suspect it from me, not even the woman whom I shall engage to take charge of the babe."

"Who is she?"

"Her name is Magdalen Hurst."

"Where does she live?"

"She is staying at Kilford at present; but her home, when she has a home, is in London."

"So much the better; the farther off the fitter. But what is she, and what brings her to this part of the world?"

"She was the stewardess of one of our small coasting steamers, the *Shaft*. The last time the *Shaft* stopped at our little port, she left there her stewardess, who was too ill with pleurisy to go farther on the voyage. Before the woman was even out of danger navigation closed in these waters, and the *Shaft* was laid up at London for the winter."

"And meantime you attended the woman, I suppose?"

"Ou, ay; a matter of humanity, not money."

"Of course. What more?"

"The woman has been married, she told me, some-

thing less than a year. Her husband is a laborer on the London docks, too poor to leave his work or raise the money to come to his wife, whose case is made worse by the circumstance that she is soon likely to become a mother, puir creature. She talks of staying at Killford until after the birth of her child, and of returning to London by the spring trip of the *Shaft*, which is usually made early in March. She will be the very person to relieve you of your responsibility."

"The very person!" echoed the lady; "and a few hundred pounds would not come amiss to her, I presume."

"Na, that it will no," assented the doctor.

Many more details of their plan were arranged between the lady and the doctor, that need not be repeated here.

Eglantine's illness was protracted, and her brain-fever alternated between delirium and stupor.

The young Earl of Ornoch came every day to inquire about the condition of his betrothed bride, as he still called her. And sometimes when it was deemed perfectly safe to admit him to her chamber, when, for instance, she was lying in a dead stupor, he would be permitted to stand at her bedside and gaze on her flushed face and motionless form.

His mother, Lady Ornoch, and his sister, Lady Katherine Moray, also frequently called, and under similar conditions, were admitted to see the invalid.

At length, however, the crisis passed favorably; the patient was declared to be out of danger, and convalescence set in.

Then the doctor returned to Seton—having promised to visit his patient on every alternate day, and to hold himself in readiness to hasten to her, at a moment's warning, if summoned, in the event of any occurrence that should require his attendance, on any intervening day.

Then also the young Earl of Ornoch yielded to the persuasion of his friends, and consented to set out upon his foreign mission.

He pleaded earnestly for a parting interview with his betrothed, but was overruled by the arguments of the

marchioness and the doctor, both of whom assured him that the condition of the convalescent was still so precarious as to render any excitement, even the agreeable one of his visit, very prejudicial to her chances of ultimate recovery.

And so doubly disappointed, of his bride and his interview, the young earl set out for the Continent, accompanied by his mother and sister, who went with him, partly to console him for what they considered only the temporary loss of his promised wife, and partly to amuse themselves at the gay Austrian capital.

A week later, on the meeting of Parliament on the first of February, the Marquis of Shetland went up to London for the season.

Lady Shetland, who had been accustomed to accompany her lord, decided on this occasion to remain at Ornoch Castle, pleading the lingering convalescence of her niece as her excuse. And the marquis willingly agreed to this arrangement.

Lady Shetland felt very much relieved by the departure of her husband and her relatives. She had the house to herself. She had the neighborhood to herself. She was free to execute her projects unwatched and unsuspected. She could now forever conceal the fatal family secret. It would be some months before the return of any one of the absentees, and by that time all should be over and hidden.

Eglantine's convalescence rapidly progressed; but even when she was quite able to walk about the house, she was still, on the plea of her health, kept a close prisoner in her room. She had grown very quiet in all her ways, very patient of restraint, very grateful for protection, and very docile to the will of her aunt.

The doctor came now but twice a week, but still held himself in readiness to answer any sudden call to the castle, whether it should come by day or by night.

He told Lady Shetland that he had made arrangements with Magdalen Hurst to receive the expected little stranger, who, he represented to the woman, would be the child of a young wife, residing in Stirling, and too sickly to nurse her own infant.

One day the doctor came to the castle with other news, with which he was so excited as to drop at once into dialect.

"Hae ye seen the *Times* the morn, my leddy?" he inquired, as soon as he met the marchioness in the library.

"No; why?"

"Then your leddyship will no hae seen the guid fortune that wad hae befallen our freend, Willie Douglas, if he had na been massacreed by the savages?"

"No; what was it?" inquired the lady, with growing interest.

"Na less than heir presumptive to the titles and estates of the auld Duke of Cheviot."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the marchioness, surprised out of her self-possession. "Then what has happened to the heir-apparent?"

"Death, na less. The Earl of Wellrose died three days since of congestion of the brain—overwork! Ye ken that since the crash came he has supported his father by writing for the daily papers. Puir laddie! it is an unco pity he could na live to come into his ain; for ye ken, my leddy, that it was only his life interest in Cheviot Court that the auld Duke sold to the usurers; it wae hae returned to the heir at his death."

"I know. I feel very sorry for the poor young man; for, as you say, he was a good son; but, doubtless, he has come into an infinitely better inheritance than any this earth could afford him," said the lady, speaking as piously as if she had been a saint instead of a sinner.

"Ay, ay, that he has," responded the doctor.

"The old father is the most to be pitied, I think, for he has lost his only son and his only support."

"Ay, ay, that he has. But he will na live long noo. Ye ken, my leddy, that everybody thought the Duke was living on the Continent."

"Yes; was he not so?"

"Nae; the sudden death of his son brought out the whole truth. The auld Duke, ashamed of his deep fall into poverty, lived in humble lodgings in Wellington street, Strand, attended by his youngest and only sur-

viving daughter, Lady Margaret, where they were known only as Mr. and Miss Jones, and where no one suspected their identity."

"Poor old man! what will he do, now that his son is gone?"

"Oh, he will do weel enough as to means. Freends hae found him out noo, and force him to accept assistance that he is na longer able to refuse. He lies dangerously ill from the shock of his son's death. But ye'll read it a' there in the *Times*. There's a full column and a half devoted to the story."

"I must read it," said the marchioness.

"But what I'm thinking of is the windfa' that wad sune hae befa'n our freend Willie Douglas, had the lad lived to receive it. Why, if he were living noo, in a few months from this, at most, he wad be the Duke of Cheviot, and in possession of the reverted estates."

"Yes, he certainly would."

"And that wad make an unco difference in our estimate of his marriage with our Eglantine, would it no? We'd ay rather have her a duchess than a countess, would we no?"

"Well, but young Douglas is dead; so it is quite vain to speculate as to what might have been," quickly replied the marchioness, for she did not in the least degree sympathize with Dr. Seton's aspiration for the young lady's advancement. She coveted the wealth of the "combination heiress" for the benefit of her nephew, Lord Ornoch.

So Dr. Seton, feeling himself snubbed by Lady Shetland, arose and went upstairs to pay his usual visit to his patient, and soon afterward he left the house.

A letter came from Lord Ornoch to Lady Shetland, inclosing one to the young Lady Linlithgow.

The marchioness held the inclosed letter in her hand some moments, debating whether she should give it to Eglantine or not.

Since the interrupted wedding, the name of the disappointed bridegroom had not been mentioned once between the marchioness and her niece. And with all her pride and self-possession, Lady Shetland shrank from

bringing up the subject of the Earl to Eglantine. But she could not prudently suppress his letter, for more letters would surely come, and though one might be supposed to be lost, if missing, yet if she should suppress all, her hand in the matter would certainly be discovered. She decided to take the letter up to her niece.

She entered the chamber where the young creature sat, wrapped in a white flannel dressing-gown and reclining in a resting-chair, and looking unusually pale and ill.

Lady Shetland seated herself, and laid the letter before her niece.

Eglantine took it up, stared as she recognized the hand-writing, and said:

"Oh, aunt! you have not told him; or he never, never would have written to me."

"No, Eglantine, I have not told him. I could not bring myself to tell him, or any one else. No one outside this room knows your secret, except Elspeth and the doctor. And no one else must know it. After your great fault, which has brought so much trouble on yourself and me, the least you can do is to have sufficient regard for the honor of the family to keep your secret."

"I will do anything I can to atone for my error, aunt; but Lord Ornoch! I did not love him except as a friend, but I do not wish to deceive him."

"Nor shall you deceive him in the end. But just now you must keep the secret even from him. And now suppose you read his letter."

Eglantine opened and read the letter, and her color came and went as her eyes traced the lines filled with expressions of devoted love and boundless faith.

"Oh, aunt!" she said, "he thinks that nothing but my brain fever interrupted the marriage; and he speaks of this marriage as something yet possible and desirable. And more than that, he speaks of it as certain; and says that he looks forward to what he calls the happy day that is to unite our lives, with delight and impatience! Oh, Aunt Shetland! it would be base in me to let a man so affectionate and confiding go on for a day in such a self-delusion!"

"Eglantine, after the mess you have made of your own life, you had better leave your fate in my hands. I know how long to keep the secret, and when and to whom to reveal it."

"Well, aunt, I must obey you so far as reserve goes; but no further. I can take no active part in deceiving Lord Ornoch. I esteem him too highly for that! I cannot answer this, Aunt Shetland," said Eglantine, laying the letter down on the little stand at her side.

Now if there was reproach in the young lady's words, there was also comfort; for though she called Lady Shetland's course "deception," she also said that she "esteemed" Lord Ornoch, "esteemed him highly."

And Lady Shetland's hopes were raised for the ultimate success of her plans.

"You need not answer it, Eglantine. You need not write to him at all," she replied; and then, noticing how unusually pale and ill the invalid looked, she advised her to go to bed, and said that she would send Elspeth to attend her.

Lady Shetland then left the room, and went down into the library, where she wrote a very affectionate and encouraging letter to her nephew, acknowledging the receipt of his letters, telling him that Eglantine was not yet well enough to write, and giving him a tender message from his coveted bride, which the young lady had certainly never sent him.

She had nearly completed her task, when she was interrupted by the entrance of Elspeth.

"Well?" inquired the lady, looking up.

"If you please, my leddy, I think the doctor had better be fetched at once," gravely responded the nurse.

"How? You don't mean——"

"Ay, I do, my leddy."

"Then you go and send Scott—— Or stop; wait a moment," said the marchioness, taking up her pen and hastily dashing off a few lines, which she sealed up and directed to Dr. Seton, at Seton.

"Tell Scot to mount the fleetest horse, and take this note to Dr. Seton."

"Ay, my leddy," answered the nurse, as she left the library.

That night, just as the doctor had swallowed his second tumbler of hot whisky punch, and composed himself comfortably under his blankets for a good night's sleep, came the message with a note from Lady Shetland, calling him in haste to Castle Trosach.

With a few irrepressible oaths, cursing the unseasonableness of the hour, he got up quickly, wrapped up warmly, sprang into the wagon that was waiting, and sped over the frosty hills.

It was midnight when he reached the castle. The servants, with the exception of one hall footman and the nurse, had retired to rest.

Lady Shetland was waiting in the library to receive him.

"Well, my leddy?" he inquired, with a bow.

"The time has come. Eglantine is in extremity. Is the woman you spoke of prepared?"

"Yes, in some sort; but she has had a great shock, poor creature. She got a letter from London telling her of the death of her husband, killed suddenly by some accident on the docks. The shock accelerated her travail; but only by a few days, I think. She has a male child, now five days old, but so feeble that I had so little hope of his life from hour to hour as to send for our minister, and have him baptized at once."

"Quite right. Now follow me to Eglantine's chamber," said the lady, rising to lead the way.

All night long, all the next day, and half the next night, Eglantine was in such extreme danger that her attendants thought her death would certainly end all their difficulties.

At midnight of the second day, the doctor, leaving his patient out of pain and peril, but in a state of extreme weakness and stupor, got into his wagon and started for Killford, taking with him a parcel done up in fine lawn and soft flannel. And no one knew the nature of that parcel except Lady Shetland, Nurse Elspeth, and Dr. Seton himself.

CHAPTER V.

THE INFANT OUTCAST.

Through the whirling snowstorm that darkened that wild March midnight, the doctor drove his tired horse, trusting less to his own faculties than to the beast's instinct to keep the right road.

He passed through his own village of Seton, where all the streets were empty and silent, and all the houses closed and dark, and he turned off toward the north and traveled three miesl farther to the little fishing hamlet of Killford, at the head of the loch, and famous for its haddock.

The hamlet was as still and dark as the village had been. He passed through its one long, straggling street that faced the sea, and then on to the northern outskirts of the place.

It was four o'clock on that pitch-dark March morning when, guided by the dull red light from its little window, he drew up before the door of a solitary and miserable hut.

Knowing that his horse was too weary even to walk away, he left him standing there, and went and opened the door.

It admitted him at once into a very wretched room, dimly lighted by the gloomy glow of a green wood-fire that smouldered on the hearth.

On a low stool before this fire crouched an aged woman, with her head bowed on her hands and her elbows resting on her knees. As the doctor came toward her she looked up and nodded. Then, seeing the flannel bundle he bore in his arms, she stared, but made no remark.

"Well, Jean," said the doctor, cheerfully, "how are we to-night?"

"I dinna ken, ser. Bad. And the bairn is dead, too; and a guid thing for it, puir, miserable little lad!" sighed the old woman, in all the despondency and bitterness of age and poverty.

"Dead? the child dead? Well, I expected it. When did it die?"

"Airly the morn, sir."

The doctor drew forward a rickety chair, seated himself cautiously, with his bundle on his knee, and pondered deeply for a few moments. Then he inquired:

"Who was here when the child died?"

"Ne'er a saul, sir, but the mither and me."

"Who has been here since?"

"Naebody, sir. Wha would be likely to come through sic a snaw?"

"No one, certainly. How did the poor creature take the death of her child?"

"She dinna ken onything about it, sir. She was fast asleep when the bairn died. And when she waket up she cried out sae for the dead man and then for her bairn, that I could na tell her the bairn was dead. I tauld her it was asleep, and that I mustn't wake it up, and she mustn't worry herself wid it till she had taken her drops, and sae I gave her the laudanum drops you left for her; and she fell off to sleep like an angel, and hae been sleeping ever sin'."

"You acted well and wisely. And so no one but yourself knows that the child is dead?"

"Naebody, sir; not even its ain mither. But I dreed the time when she will wake, and call for her bairn. Losing her gude man, and now losing her wee bairn, it would kill her, doctor!" whimpered the crone.

"Certainly it would kill her, Jean. And we mustn't kill her, you know."

"But how will I pit her off again, doctor, when she wakes and ca's for her bairn?"

"See here," said the doctor, opening the soft flannel wraps that enveloped the parcel on his knees, and revealing the form of a newborn infant—"see here; this is a child she was engaged to nurse. This child has lost its mother, just as surely as that mother on the bed has lost her child."

"Eh! dear, puir babe!" said the woman, gazing upon the sleeping infant.

"Now, then, while the woman is still asleep, you must

undress this babe, and dress it in a suit of the dead babe's clothes. You understand?"

"Eh! yes, sir.

"And then, when the mother wakes and calls for her child, put this one in her arms and say nothing about it. She will think it is her own, and ask no questions. Do you hear?" inquired the doctor, seeing that the woman hesitated.

"Aye, sir, I hear. And I comprehend that the new babe will satisfy her for a time; but when she finds it's no her ain, she'll be waur than ever."

"She need never find it out."

"Eh, sir?"

"She has scarcely seen her own babe; and in the darkness of this room she has scarcely become acquainted with its features. This living child is of the same sex as the other one, and looks not unlike it. When it is dressed in the other one's clothes, and laid in the bereaved mother's arms, she will never know the difference. Now do you see?"

"What will I do wi' the dead bairn? The mither might see it, or some o' the neebor folk might drap in and find it! Eh, dear! what will I do wi' the dead bairn?" sighed the woman, in all the imbecile distress of dotage.

"Tut, tut; dress the dead babe in the finery of the living one and give it to me to take away, and neither the mother nor any one else shall ever see or hear of it again, or suspect that it ever lived and died. Now, be quick in changing the clothes of the children before the mother wakes," said the doctor, putting Eglantine's infant into the arms of the crone.

The woman obeyed the doctor in every particular. And, while she was still engaged in doing his will, he approached her, and whispered:

"And hard ye, Jean; for that poor young creature's sake, you must keep the secret of her baby's death, and let her still believe that the living one is her own. And listen further," he continued, stooping down to her ear, "So long as you keep that secret I will pay you a pension of five shillings a week, and give you the use of this

cottage and garden rent free; but just so soon as you tell it, I will stop your pension and turn you out of the house. Do you understand?"

The crone understood much more than she had before. Her bleared eyes shone like smouldering coals. She nodded her head quickly several times, and said:

"I understand verra wee', doctor. Dinna fear me. Ise be dumb as the dead."

"All right, then," said the doctor, as he buttoned up his overcoat, turning his collar well up around his throat, and put on his cap, drawing down its lapels well over his jaws.

"Now give me that," he said, referring to the parcel of fine baby linen the woman had just rolled up. He went out and stowed the parcel under the seat of his wagon, and then came back and lifted the tiny corpse from its rude cradle, and, with a final whispered caution to the old crone, carried it out of the house.

The doctor was a childless widower, and his house was kept by a worthy couple, Cuthbert Kinlock, groom and valet, and Ann Kinlock, cook and laundress; they were usually addressed by the doctor as "Cuddie" and "Nannie." They had one son, Christopher, whom the doctor called "Kit," and who had found so much favor in his eyes that he was bringing him up to his own profession, much to the disgust of his neighbors, who thought that a lad of Kit Kinlock's humble station had no right to such advancement.

Kit was the only one astir when the doctor arrived with his burden, and, hastily explaining that he had brought a new subject for post-mortem examination, he carried the little form within.

The post-mortem examination was, of course, nothing but an excuse for bringing the body of the babe to the house; The work, therefore, was very slight, and soon over. Then the doctor spread a white cloth over the little frame, and,turning to his pupil, said:

"I have a patient to see at some distance; so I must leave you in full charge here. You will lock up the office after I have gone, and take the certificate to the parish register; and then see Gray, the undertaker, and

ask him to come here this afternoon and attend to this matter. And if I should not be home when Gray comes, you will take my place and arrange with him for me. I give you full powers, and will pay all expenses."

The doctor was going on with some further directions, when old Kinlock, who had been roused by his son, entered to announce that, according to orders, a wason was at the door, with a fresh horse, hired from the Seton Arms.

"Yes, yes," said the doctor; "all right." And, while putting on his overcoat, gloves and cap, he turned to his pupil and added:

"You will keep this office closed under lock and key until Gray comes. Then you will show him in and give him his instructions. Do you mind?"

"Yes, sir; and I will scrupulously follow all your directions," answered the young man, as he attended his preceptor to the wagon.

It was near noon when the physician reached Trosach Castle.

He was shown into the library, where Lady Shetland was awaiting his arrival.

"How is your patient?" he inquired, after respectfully greeting the marchioness.

"She has not spoken one word, or given one sign of consciousness, since you left her," gravely answered the lady, leading the way to the sick chamber.

They found the beautiful invalid lying on the bed, still and white as an effigy on a tomb. She was faithfully watched by her devoted nurse, who sat motionless at her side.

The doctor felt her pulse, and lifted her eyelids, and examined the pupils of her eyes, and all this without awaking her.

"Oh, she will get over this, and be all the better for it when she awakes. This is a deep restorative sleep, from which she will awaken much refreshed," said the doctor, cheerfully, when he had completed his examination.

"She will?" echoed the marchioness. "Thank Heaven for that. But mind, doctor, when she does awake—I

know her so well!—she will give us trouble about that child. She will insist upon seeing it."

"You can easily settle her on that subject. The child is dead. Tell her so. She'll cry a little at first, but she will think it all for the best, under the circumstances. Tell her the child is dead."

"Dead?" echoed the lady, in a tone of surprise, dread and remorse—"dead?"

"Yes, my leddy—dead! Dead to her," he added, silently, to his own conscience. Then, speaking up, he continued: "The body is lying at my house now, and it will be buried to-morrow as the child of one of my poor patients."

"Dead!" repeated the marchioness, covering her pale face with her hands—"the child dead! That, indeed, would be something to be very thankful for, if—if—oh, Dr. Seton! I dread to add the words—if it did not perish from neglect or exposure, or from being taken out so far through the snowstorm last night!"

The doctor indulged in a little low laugh as he muttered:

"Your conscience is a very sensitive one, my leddy; but set it at rest on this point. The dead babe did not perish from neglect or exposure, but it died from the effects of its mother's mental and physical sufferings before birth."

Next morning the marchioness broke the news gently enough to the stricken Eglantine, who persisted in believing that a terrible crime had been committed at the instigation of her aunt.

"I forgive you," said the marchioness, coolly. "I forgive you, and even pity you, for you, Eglantine, you were the cause of your infant's death——"

"I—oh!" she began; but she was too much exhausted to continue. She could only sob and pant. The marchioness continued:

"Yes, Eglantine, you! It was your mental and physical tortures and agonies that fatally affected the child's health and life—tortures and agonies brought on by sin and remorse, and resulting in great danger to yourself, and in death to your child."

"I wish I had died, too! Oh, I wish I had died, too!" murmured Eglantine, like one sinking under the influence of a narcotic, yet whose last sentient thought was one of pain.

"Dr. Seton, when he comes to-morrow, will verify my words, and satisfy you as to the true cause of your child's death," continued the lady.

"Hush! let me alone; hush! I would rather hear a serpent hiss than you," were the last dreamy, but bitter words of Eglantine, as she finally succumbed and fell off to sleep.

Meanwhile Dr. Seton sped on homeward, where he arrived in time to meet the undertaker, with whom he arranged for the burial of the child. It was interred, by permission, just under the flagstones of the church floor, below the monument of Willie Douglas. There was no name added to indicate who lay below.

Three weeks later Magdelene Hurst embarked as stewardess on board the *Shaft*, bound for London, and carrying in her arms the child of Eglantine, never dreaming that her own baby lay sleeping beneath the church flagstones.

At parting the doctor put ten pounds in her hand, representing the sum as the donation of charitable people. The stewardess took it thankfully and without suspicion, and so departed.

CHAPTER VI.

WAS SHE A WIDOW?

Meanwhile Eglantine, with all the advantages of youth and health on her side, rapidly recovered her strength and cheerfulness.

Dr. Seton assured her that her babe had not perished through any neglect or exposure; he even took his oath to that effect, as, of course, we know he could safely do.

Then he volunteered to take Eglantine in his car-

riage, as soon as she should be able to go out, to see the grave of "the" child. And when he led her into the church, and pointed to the flagstone just below Willie Douglas' monument, and told her "the" babe was buried there, he added that "it" had died, not from the effect of any neglect or exposure, but simply and naturally from injuries received through her mental and physical sufferings previous to its birth.

And then the reproaches that Eglantine had heaped upon Lady Shetland's head were turned upon her own self; and she wept bitterly from sorrow and remorse.

"'The sins of the parents are visited upon the children,' I know," she said; "but oh, it seems so sad that my levity and folly should be visited so heavily upon such a poor little harmless, helpless creature!"

She felt compunction, too, for her supposed injustice to Lady Shetland, and she tried to atone for it by a more complete obedience to that lady's will.

The marchioness, on her part, saw her vantage ground, and kept it; she never uttered one word of reproach to her niece, but sought by forbearance to bind the young creature still faster to herself.

She even undertook the duty of making Lord Ornoch acquainted with the state of affairs, for which Eglantine was really grateful.

But this suited the marchioness better than any other course, and she hastened to appoint an interview with the young earl and told him the whole story, not forgetting to add that Eglantine's child was now dead.

Lord Ornoch was unable to speak for a long time. He strode up and down the room with a sorrowful face.

At length he paused and stood before the lady, and said:

"Aunt Shetland, I must put in a plea for this poor child; for she is little less than a child in years as well as in nature. Heavens knows how heavily this blow has fallen upon me, how heavily it must have fallen even upon you, but it should not make us cruel or unjust in our thoughts of her. She did not sin in wilfulness; she did but err in judgment. In the sight of

Heaven, she is blameless; for in the sight of Heaven she has been a wife and a widow."

"We could not make the world receive her as such," coldly commented the marchioness.

"Then the world is a sinner, a hypocrite and a pharisee, and her misfortune must be hidden from its false eyes and cruel judgment. But as for me, I will not forsake her. On the contrary, if she will permit me, I will give her the highest proof of confidence that a man can give a woman: I will make her my wife."

"And what would the world say to that, if they knew all?"

"If the world were a just judge, it would say that I did well; but as it is not a just judge, the case must not be brought to its tribunal," replied the young earl; and much more he said in palliation of Eglantine's error in that concealed marriage.

The lady did not interrupt him during his speech, for she could only gaze upon him in utter astonishment and unbounded admiration.

"It is the noble Ornoch blood," she said, to herself; then aloud to him: "You forgive her, you pity her, you plead for her——"

"In a word, I love her," murmured the young man, in a sweet and thrilling tone.

"And yet it is against you that she has most sinned."

"I cannot see that she has sinned at all; certainly not against me. At the time she contracted that marriage, she was not in any way bound to me; on the contrary, she had rejected my suit, frankly telling me that she meant to marry William Douglas. No; I cannot see that she has sinned against me, or against any one else."

"Except, then, in concealing her marriage until she was forced to confess it."

"Ah, but I can well comprehend the timidity, the ignorance and false reasoning that kept her silent. At first she had been very frank with us. She had told us that as soon as she should become of age, and her own mistress, she would marry William Douglas. Well, what did we do? We procured him a commission in a

marching regiment, and sent him off to Canada to be killed. What did she do? She had meant to be obedient, and to wait until she should be her own mistress, before she should marry him; but in the sorrow of the approaching parting she yielded to temptation and married him then, feeling, no doubt, the more justified because her respected old tutor performed the ceremony. Well, the young man met a tragic fate out there. The young wife was widowed. We pressed her hardly, closely, cruelly into the path she took—you and I! Besides, as you yourself said, she did not know the worst. She thought her dead and buried marriage was all that she had to conceal. Poor child! when her heart was half broken with grief for her dead, she accepted me to please you."

"And in doing so, she should have confessed her former marriage," firmly asserted the lady.

"Ah, yes; perhaps she should, but she had not the courage to do so. Have we always the courage to do right, Aunt Shetland?"

"I know I have, and I think you have."

The next morning, according to appointment, Lord Ornoch called and inquired for Lady Linlithgow.

He was shown into a summer parlor, bright with sunshine, fragrant with flowers and cool with the breeze from the loch that lay under its windows.

Here Eglantine soon joined him. She blushed and trembled with painful consciousness and embarrassment, as she crossed the room toward the window at which he sat.

But he arose and went to meet her, and drew her gravely and silently to his bosom, and pressed a sweet, solemn kiss upon her brow. Then he drew her arm within his own, led her to a sofa near the window, placed her on it, and seated himself beside her. His whole manner was less ardent, more respectful than it would have been had he not known her secret. It was full of serious tenderness.

Before a word was spoken between them, Eglantine dropped her head on her bosom, covered her face with her hands and wept softly behind them.

Ornoch watched her silently, sympathetically, for a few minutes, and then, perceiving that she was not likely to recover herself, he murmured gently:

"Why does my darling weep? 'Let the dead past bury its dead.' 'Live in the living present.' Weep no more, my Eglantine; or, if you must, weep here, where I can dry your tears." And he opened his arms to her.

She looked up, hastily wiped her eyes and breathed:

"Oh, I only grieve to think how unworthy I am of your great love. You deserve a better wife than I can be, Lord Ornoch."

"I wish no better one, out of all the wide world. I wish only your dear self. I wish you to tell me, love, when I may claim you for my own."

"As soon as you please, Lord Ornoch. I esteem you, I revere you more than I do any being on earth. And, oh, how I wish that I could love you as you have the right to be loved! But I will do all I can to make you happy; and, therefore, I repeat, I will be yours as soon as you please," she murmured, in a low, timid tone.

"And you will trust me to win the sweet, good heart you wish to give me," he answered, as he drew her to his bosom and pressed a kiss on her lips.

"And now I must go and see Lady Shetland," he said, rising gayly.

He found that strong-minded woman waiting for him in her favorite room, the library. He told her all that had passed between Eglantine and himself.

"And so she has consented to marry you as soon as you please. Well, then, let it be at once; that is to say, this day week. That will give us time to telegraph to London for the marquis, and to Vienna for your mother and sister, and for them to arrive here in time for the wedding, which I think, under the circumstances, should be rather private. What do you say?"

"I agree with you entirely," replied the young earl.

Eglantine, when, as a mere matter of form, she was consulted on the subject, expressed her willingness to come into any arrangement made by Lady Shetland and Lord Ornoch.

And then they were all so busy with their prepara-

tions that not one of them found time to look at the *Times* that day. If they had, some one might have seen this short paragraph:

NOT DEAD.—A private letter from Toronto states that Lieutenant William Douglas, of Her Majesty's —— Regiment of Foot, who was reported to have been killed by the Indians last summer, is not dead, but is a captive with the tribe. A detachment of soldiers has been sent from Fort Stagnant to look him up. By the way, it will be remembered that, by the recent death of the Earl of Wellrose, Mr. Douglas is now the heir apparent of the Dukedom of Cheviot.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

Captain Frank Harry, of the Royal Guards, the "finest fellow in the service," as he was called by his associates who enjoyed his wines and cigars, sat at one of the tables in the big dining-saloon at King's Cross Station.

He was idly scanning the columns of the *Times* when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and, looking up, he saw—Willie Douglas.

The paper fell to the floor, and two hands met with a clasp of iron.

"It is Douglas, isn't it?" said young Harry.

"Or all that's left of him," replied Willie gayly.

"And where in the heavens have you dropped from? We thought that you had been comfortably scalped by the North American Indians; though it is true that I have recently seen that contradicted. How was it? You were not scalped, that is evident; for those infantile golden locks of yours are as full as ever. Come, sit down and have some tea and tell us all about it. I expect to hear a narrative that will outrival Gulliver and Munchausen."

"I came very near losing my scalp, and my life also. All my unfortunate companions, except one, were toma-

hawked and scalped before my eyes," replied young Douglas, with a sad seriousness that rebuked the levity of the others.

"Oh, indeed," put in Harry, with penitent gravity; "but how did you escape?"

"Myself and my servant were taken prisoners and carried far away into the wilderness, where we remained captives among them for ten months."

"By Jove! that was a misfortune!" burst forth young Harry, setting down his teacup. Then, after a few moments' silence, he added. "I don't understand what motives those savages could have had for taking you prisoners—that is, if I know anything about them. They didn't want to eat you, as the New Zealanders might have done; nor to make slaves of you, as the Moors would have done——"

"No; but they wanted to have the cruel sport of torturing us to death at their leisure, as I afterward found out. You have surely read of their fiendish treatment of such unfortunates as fall alive into their hands."

"Oh, yes; but I thought that such barbarities belonged to the past, even among savages."

"Not at all! These wretches have not made one step forward in civilization since the first discovery of their continent. No; I and my servant and fellow sufferer, being taken alive and unhurt, were reserved for torture —their torture, which excels in fiendish cruelty the most ingenious deviltries of the Inquisition. We were carried many miles into the wilderness, to their encampment. On our arrival, all the women and children ran out of their smoky wigwams to greet the returning braves with their captives and their booty. And they leaped and danced about us like so many frenzied she-devils and devil's imps."

Here Douglas stopped to sip his tea; but Harry, who was impatient to hear the sequel of his adventure, soon cried out:

"Go on, for Heaven's sake! How the deuce did you escape torture and death?"

"Through another blessed custom of theirs, and through two women."

"Ah, yes! well?"

"You have read that when an Indian woman loses her husband or son in battle, and there are male prisoners brought in, she may claim one among them as a substitute for the lost son or husband?"

"Oh, yes! So an Indian woman fell in love with you, and saved your life? Quite natural, my fine fellow! I always said you were born to be successful among the fair sex!" laughed the irrepressible Harry.

"You are too fast," said Douglas.

"So my respected grandmother always tells me," laughed Harry.

"I mean to say that you are precipitate in your conclusions. It was an Indian mother who lost her son, that claimed me. A strapping, able-bodied woman of forty she was; and she took her 'rights' without talking about them—took me out of the hands of the warriors without asking their permission, and by the strength of her arms. Well, I was saved from the death of torture; but, though I was an adopted son of the tribe, I was not the less a prisoner, since I was not permitted to leave them."

"And your servant? Who adopted him?"

Douglas broke into a hearty, irrepressible laugh.

"He was claimed by a hideously ugly squaw, but he escaped from her clutches, got clear off to camp and brought the rest of the company, who speedily routed my captors and restored me to freedom again."

"And you were ten months among them?"

"Ten horrible months that I will tell you about at some future time. Just now I want news—news of my neighbors, the Shetlands."

"Young Lady Linlithgow was engaged to be married to the Earl of Ornoch. The programme was, that they were to be united at Trosach Castle, and immediately after the ceremony they were to proceed to Vienna, to which court the earl has been appointed ambassador."

"Well—well—well; why don't you go on?" gasped

William Douglas, breathlessly, seeing that the other had stopped to drink his tea.

"Good gracious, man! I did not know I could be so interesting. Well, the morning of the wedding came, the altar was decorated; the breakfast set; the guests assembled; the bride dressed; the bridegroom waiting, when——

"Well! well!"

"The Marquis of Shetland suddenly entered the drawing-room, and announced that the bride had been taken suddenly ill, and the marriage could not go forward that day."

"Thank Heaven! my own dear love! true to the last!" deeply breathed young Douglas.

"I say, look here, what's the matter with you, old boy?" asked Harry, in surprise.

"Nothing. I don't know! Go on! What next?"

"Intelligible, all that! 'What next?' Why, nothing next. The wedding guests went home; the bridegroom expectant went off to the Continent; bride-elect had a brain fever, and the family have not been in town since. At the opening of Parliament the marquis came up alone. By the way, I saw by this evening's *Express* that he has left town for Trosach Castle."

"Yes; I heard so much as that. But Ornoch—confound him! where is he? Still at the court of Austria?"

"No; I saw his arrival in town a week ago, and his departure for Ornoch the same day."

"The devil!" exclaimed William Douglas, starting up.

"Hallo! what's the matter now?" demanded Harry, in surprise.

"Oh, nothing much! She is my—— But it is of no consequence!" burst forth the young lieutenant, with a strange laugh.

"Well, I do declare! All this comes of living ten months among North American Indians, I suppose," murmured the young guardsman, in some amazement.

"Excuse me, Frank! I am distrait; but you would not wonder if you knew all. Is that broken-off marriage on the tapis again, do you know?"

"No, I do not. I haven't seen nor heard a word on the subject yet."

"Things look so—everybody going to Scotland!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Why, dear old Willie, it is the season for everybody to go to Scotland, especially for those who have delightful homes in the Highlands. But I begin to see what ails you now. You're spooney on the little Lady Linlithgow!" exclaimed Captain Harry, clapping his friend on the back.

Young Douglas blushed like a girl, and so betrayed himself.

"Well, cheer up, old fellow! It is my opinion that broken-off marriage will never be patched up again. Such seldom are, you know. Besides, bless my soul! your chance of success is far better than that of the Earl of Ornoch now!"

"Better! how do you make that out? A poor lieutenant in a marching regiment!"

"Sell out at once, my boy, and go upon your expectations."

"My expectations!" echoed the young man, a little bitterly.

"Yes, your expectations!"

"I should like to know what they are—to reach a captaincy when I shall be fifty years old, and retire on half-pay at seventy!" laughed the young man.

"If you choose, in spite of fate, to remain in the army; but in the mean time you inherit the titles and estates of the Duke of Cheviot."

"Harry! for Heaven's sake! if you are not cruelly chaffing me, explain your meaning."

"It is simple enough. The Earl of Wellrose, the only son and heir of the aged Duke of Cheviot, died last January, leaving you, as next of kin and heir-at-law, to step into his prospects—that is all."

Young Douglas threw his hands to his head and clasped his forehead. He could not comprehend the good fortune that had so suddenly fallen upon him. He literally reeled under the blow.

"Since you did not know this sooner, I am very happy

to be the first to announce it and to congratulate you, Douglas," said Captain Harry, now quite serious.

"Stop, stop one moment, for Heaven's sake!" murmured the young lieutenant, divided between an almost overwhelming joy at the great chance in his future prospects, and an honest remorse for rejoicing at the good fortune which came to him only through the ill fortune of others.

"I am very sorry for the early death of the young earl," replied Willie, speaking really from compunction, rather than from grief.

"He is better off," put in Captain Harry, coolly, uttering the commonplace piece of consolation.

"And I am still sorrier for the bereaved old duke," continued Willie, gravely.

"Oh, he won't live long to suffer; besides, he has a great comfort in the Lady Margaret Douglas, who was always his favorite child. He cannot suffer long. He will soon 'sleep with his fathers,' and then you will be the seventh Duke of Cheviot, with a rent roll of thirty thousand pounds a year."

"And her equal in rank and fortune!" burst forth the boy, with irrepressible triumph.

"Her equal indeed! Much more than that. A dukedom is somewhat higher up the ladder than a barony, I fancy. Indeed, the Duke of Cheviot holds several baronies, besides the Earldom of Wellrose. There is no marquisate in the family, however, I believe."

They were interrupted by the striking of the clock.

William Douglas started up.

"What now?" inquired Captain Harry.

"It is nine o'clock. I am off to Scotland by the ten o'clock train, and I must hurry in order to reach it. Will you come to the station with me?"

"With great pleasure," said the young guardsman, rising.

They found Lieutenant Douglas' servant waiting with his luggage, in the hall.

A porter called a cab, and the friends entered it and soon found themselves rattling on toward the King's Cross Station.

They were in time. Young Douglas purchased his tickets, jumped into a first-class carriage, waved his hand to his friend, and was off on his journey.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN APPARITION.

It was a very charming party that assembled at Trosach Castle to do honor to the approaching nuptials of Alexander Moray, Earl of Ornoch, and Eglantine Seton, Baroness Linlithgow.

The telegrams that had been sent to summon friends and relatives from distant places had been immediately answered, to the effect that the recipients would make it a point to be at the castle in good time for the wedding.

And first came the Marquis of Shetland, glad to escape from the heat and smoke of the city to the beautiful shores of the loch and the bracing air of the mountains; but by no means so glad of the occasion, which was meant to bestow his young, wealthy niece, a peeress in her own right, upon his wife's impoverished nephew, who had nothing but his empty title and his mortgaged estates. He acquiesced in this matrimonial measure merely because it was the dearest wish of his wife's heart. And so now he was on hand to take his own part in the performance by giving away the bride.

On the day after the arrival of the marquis came the Countess Dowager of Ornoch, with her daughter, Lady Katherine Moray, and her friend, the beautiful Lady Margaret Douglas. As their own house at Ornoch was not ready to receive the family, they, at the request of Lady Shetland, took up their abode at Trosach Castle.

Other guests arrived on the succeeding days, and the house was full of midsummer company.

Eglantine Seton had never been very fond of her prospective sister-in-law, the Lady Katherine Moray. That

haughty, handsome blonde was "not one to love." Even her beauty was too pronounced in style to please artistic eyes. Her form, though perfectly proportioned, was too tall, her bust too full, her head too round, her features too regular, her yellow hair, white forehead, blue eyes and red cheeks and lips were too bright in colors and too strongly contrasted for the spirit of beauty. "Dazzling!" "Splendid!" "Stunning!" were the epithets bestowed upon the young lady by her admirers.

Lady Margaret Douglas was of a very different description, both as to person and character. She was of medium size, slender, but not thin. Her features were small, soft and pretty. Her eyes were dark hazel, large, liquid, tender, and fringed with thickly-set, curled lashes and arched with slender dark brows. Her hair of soft brown rippled off in tiny wavelets from her pure, pale forehead and was gathered in a curly bunch at the back of her head. Her complexion was clear and pale, save where it warmed into a peachy bloom on her oval cheeks and brightened to crimson buds on her small, plump lips.

She was wearing second mourning for her brother, and her plain gray dress harmonized well with her quiet style of beauty.

Eglantine Seton had never met Lady Margaret Douglas before her visit to the castle. But she had heard much of that sweet girl's devotion to her aged, ill and impoverished father, and thus she was prepared to love her.

Eglantine learned from Lady Ornoch that even this short relaxation was a matter of necessity that had been forced upon the devoted daughter. Her nervous system was breaking down under the severe ordeal of a sick room in London in the dogdays. And the duke's medical attendant ordered her to the Highlands for recuperation. The duke, who was or seemed to be recovering his health, refused to take so long a journey himself, but he enforced the doctor's orders that his daughter should go to Scotland; and he wrote a note to his old friend Lady Ornoch, whose arrival at her

town house in Park Lane, *en route* for Scotland, he had seen chronicled in the morning paper; and he requested the countess to take charge of Lady Margaret for the journey, as he intended to send his daughter to visit his kinsman, Dugald Douglas of Stony Isle, near Trosach Castle.

This note brought a call and an invitation from Lady Ornoch, which ended in Lady Margaret becoming her guest for the season.

As soon as Eglantine Seton and Margaret Douglas met, they began to love each other.

Eglantine begged Margaret to be her second bridesmaid, as Lady Katherine Moray was to be her first.

And Margaret consented to lay off her mourning for the occasion, that she might oblige one for whom she felt almost a sisterly affection.

It wanted yet three days to the wedding morning, when Lady Ornoch, thinking that the young people in the house were rather dull, proposed to her sister, Lady Shetland, that they should get up a dance for the next evening. And as the weather was quite cool, and there seemed nothing to prevent it, the countess consented. And accordingly the few necessary preparations for the almost impromptu entertainment were made. Invitations were sent out to neighboring friends, and a telegram sent to Glasgow to bring down a band of music. The great hall was cleared out and decorated for the dancers, and all was ready by noon of the next day.

That very noon William Douglas was traveling between Edinburgh and Stirling on his way to Trosach Castle.

When the hour came for the assembling of the company, the house began to fill with a merry crowd of young people, who were all the merrier because the entertainment was so informal and so unexpected.

The Earl of Ornoch opened the ball, with Lady Linlithgow as his partner. Their vis-a-vis were Captain Sinclair of the Royal Guards and Lady Katherine Moray. Kilgour of Kilgour with Lady Margaret Douglas, and the Honorable Duncan Kier, with Miss Kilgour, completed the set.

The pleasure was at its very acme; the young ladies and gentlemen were dancing, chatting, flirting, laughing, as if there were no such thing as a care, a want, or a duty in the world; and their elders, occupying the sofas against the walls, were gossiping with each other or silently speculating on the probable or even possible marriages, eligible or otherwise, for these youthful candidates for matrimonial honors, when the doors were thrown open by a hall footman, who announced a name that was only heard by those standing nearest the entrance.

There was a slight commotion among these as they made way for the newcomer, just as Eglantine, with a wild cry of joy, fled across the hall and threw herself half-fainting into the arms of the stranger, who caught and strained her sinking form to his breast.

The startled crowd turned to see the cause of all this.

There stood William Douglas, as one raised from the dead, supporting the fainting form of Eglantine Seton.

A spell as of sudden death fell upon the stupefied assembly! The gentle turbulence made up of gliding feet, floating forms, low tones and sweet laughter, was suddenly hushed into stillness.

And then a murmur of voices arose among those who recognized the visitor. One of the first to know him again was the Marquis of Shetland, who exclaimed:

"Why, Lord bless my soul! it is young Douglas, come back from Canada, alive after all."

"Why, yes," said Captain Sinclair, of the Guards, "the report of his death was contradicted in the *Times*. Didn't you know it?"

"No, I did not," answered the marquis, leaving the others to discuss the matter, and striding toward the door where he thought his interference much needed. He was followed by the Earl of Ornoch, Lady Shetland and other members of the family circle. All the guests had the tact and delicacy to keep aloof.

"Release that young lady immediately, sir!" commanded the Marquis of Shetland, attempting to withdraw Eglantine.

"Thanks, no; she is my wife," answered young Doug-

las quite coolly, as he put off the marquis with one arm, while he gathered Eglantine closer to his heart with the other.

"Your wife! Are you mad, sir? Release her this moment!" ordered the marquis, in the low, intense tones of repressed anger.

The young man replied only by gazing upon Eglantine's pale and quivering face with looks of unutterable affection.

"Lady Linlithgow, leave that man's support, and come with me!" said the marquis, appealing to his niece.

"I cannot, uncle! He is my husband! Aunt Shetland knows it; so does Lord Ornoch; so does Dr. Seton; so does Elspeth," answered Eglantine in quivering tones. Then, looking up into young Douglas' face, she broke forth suddenly, "Oh, Willie! We thought you were dead, and my heart was broken—broken, but faithful to you, Willie, notwithstanding all this!"

"I know it, beloved—I know it well," he answered, with his loyal faith in her.

"And you live! you live! Oh, it is too much joy! And oh, it may be only a dream! Oh, Willie, tell me that it is no dream—that I look in your face again!"

"It is no dream, my own dear, dear wife!"

"Oh, I am so happy! so happy!" sighed Eglantine.

Then suddenly, compassionately remembering one who was made utterly miserable by the same event that rendered her so happy, she turned and looked for Lord Ornoch.

He was standing at a short distance, leaning against one of the wreathed pillars for support. He was deadly pale, but, outwardly at least, calm. Eglantine's eyes filled with ears.

"Oh, pardon me, pardon me, if I have hurt you, Lord Ornoch! I did not know what I was doing. I did not know that my dear husband was alive!" she pleaded.

"I have nothing to pardon, Lady Linlithgow, however much I may have to regret. You have done me no intentional wrong. I hope that you may be happy," answered the earl, in a voice vibrating with the deep

emotion of his soul. And he was moving sadly away, when he was stopped by Lady Shetland, who had almost lost her high-bred self-possession.

"And will you give her up in this manner? Then you deserve to lose her!" said her ladyship, in the low, deep tones of intense and concentrated passion.

"She is the wife of another man," coldly replied the earl, bowing and moving off.

"The wife of another man, indeed! She is nothing of the kind. In professing to be such, she only proclaims her own dishonor. That marriage ceremony, privately performed in England, between two minors, is perfectly null and void. Will no one take that girl from that man?" she hissed between her set teeth, as she laid her own hands upon the form of Eglantine.

"Softly, Lady Shetland," said young Douglas, gently putting her back. "Your ladyship is utterly mistaken. The marriage ceremony privately performed between two minors in London, and openly acknowledged by both parties in Scotland, is as valid as church and state can make it. I appeal to the marquis here, if this is not true?"

The Marquis of Shetland, who for the last ten minutes had been standing in a state of stupefied silence, now recovered his faculties, and also recollected that William Douglas was no longer the poor lieutenant, with nothing but his pay for the present, and no prospects but of slow promotion for the future. He was now the heir presumptive of a dukedom with a rent roll of thirty thousand pounds a year, and consequently he was a much more eligible match for Eglantine than was the impoverished young Earl of Ornoch.

"I appeal to the marquis here; I appeal to the whole company assembled here, if our marriage is not now perfectly valid!" repeated Mr. Douglas.

"Hush, hush; for Heaven's sake, don't call others into our counsels," whispered the marquis. Then, addressing the marchioness, he astonished her by saying quite coolly: "Mr. Douglas is perfectly correct in his statement. The marriage openly acknowledged here is valid and binding, and cannot be dissolved except by

death or crime. But see! our friends are watching us from a distance, and wondering what we are doing. This must end. Lady Margaret Douglas, my dear, come here. Take Eglantine and lead her away to her chamber, and remain with her until she recovers her calmness. Mr. Douglas, do me the favor to follow me to the library."

And gently Lady Margaet put her arm around the waist of her friend and led her from the hall.

And Mr. Douglas followed the Marquis of Shetland to the library, leaving a general low murmur of voices behind them.

The Earl of Ornoch had also disappeared. There remained standing near the door Lady Shetland, Lady Ornoch and Lady Katherine Moray.

"Did you know of this?" inquired the Countess of Ornoch, addressing her sister in a tone of reproach.

Lady Shetland made a gesture of disgust as she answered:

"I knew of the private marriage months after it had taken place, and after we had heard the report of young Douglas' death. I told Ornoch of it, and left him to keep or break his engagement with my niece as he deemed best. He decided to keep it, not dreaming of such a contingency as the return of Douglas, whom we believed to be dead."

"And I, his mother, was told nothing of all this," complained Lady Ornoch.

"It rested with him to tell you, not with me. He was the person most concerned, you perceive. And there is little doubt but that he would have told you some time."

"Some time!" echoed Lady Ornoch.

"Come, sister, you know that I feel as much annoyed, disappointed, mortified, as you can possibly be. But we must both try to prevent scandal, if possible. Let us mingle with our guests and promote their enjoyment," said Lady Shetland.

And seeing her groom of the chambers passing near, in the outer hall, she beckoned him to approach, and

directed him to go to the band of musicians and order them to go on with the music.

The next music on the programme was a waltz, and twenty or thirty couples were soon whirling round and round to its delightful measure. To the waltz succeeded the quadrille. And then, in the interval of rest that ensued, Eglantine re-entered the hall, leaning on the arm of the Marquis of Shetland, and followed by the Lady Margaret Douglas on the arm of her cousin, Lieutenant Douglas. It had been decided among them that no announcement of the marriage should be made to the assembled company that evening, and no explanation of the little scene at the door should be offered, but that the programme of the evening's entertainment should be carried out, just as if nothing extraordinary had occurred to interrupt it.

William Douglas was warmly welcomed by his friends and acquaintances in the assembly, and each and all were anxious to hear the story of his captivity and his deliverance. But he smilingly replied to all inquiries that he could not satisfy their curiosity without making a speech, and this was not an occasion for oratory.

Then the music struck up again, and the dancing recommenced.

But neither William Douglas nor Eglantine joined the dancers, nor did they approach each other again during the evening. It was judged best that they should not do so, especially as the company seemed to have no suspicion of the true state of the case, but appeared to have satisfied themselves with a little theory of their own, to the effect that the sudden arrival of a man supposed to have been murdered many months ago was quite sufficient to cause a disturbance much greater than that which for a few moments had interrupted their festivities—quite sufficient, in fact, to cause the fainting of Eglantine, who was prevented from sinking by being supported in the arms of the newcomer. Such was their theory, from all they had seen. Of course, they had heard nothing of the con-

versation, carried on in the low, intense tones in which the parties spoke.

At eleven o'clock the supper-room was thrown open, and the guests marched in to the table.

After supper the ancient dance of Sir Roger de Coverly was performed.

After that the ball broke up, and the company left the house.

William Douglas lingered last of all. He hardly knew yet what his fate was to be.

Lady Ornoch and Lady Katherine Moray retired to their apartments. Lady Shetland, too indignant to remain behind, followed.

Still William Douglas lingered, expecting perhaps, poor love-sick boy! to be invited to stay all night. And Eglantine lingered, holding on to the arm of Lady Margaret Douglas, whom she detained to keep her in countenance. And meanwhile the servants were going around snuffing out the wax lights in the chandeliers. At length the Marquis of Shetland spoke:

"It seems very inhospitable, my good boy, but really I think you had better say good-night, and go away. You know where to find a boat to take you over to Stony Isle, and you can get there in time to surprise the servants, who will be just stirring. Come again to-morrow, and we will talk this matter over amicably. You shall have Eglantine, of course, the sooner because you have got her already. But we must try to arrange affairs so as to avoid having you talked about."

William Douglas bowed in acknowledgment of the marquis' prudence, and then took his leave.

Lady Margaret Douglas drew Eglantine away, and remained with her during the night.

The family were late in rising the next morning.

The Marquis of Shetland, Lady Margaret Douglas and Eglantine were the only members of the family that appeared at the breakfast table. The marquis greeted the two young ladies affectionately. In fact, the more he reflected upon Eglantine's marriage, the better he felt pleased with it.

"The girl has done much better for herself than we could have done for her," he said to himself.

While they were still at breakfast they were surprised by an unexpected visitor, in the person of Dr. McGill, who entered unannounced.

The marquis half arose from his seat, with a look of interrogation on his face.

"Excuse me, your lordship! The footman told me you were at breakfast, but my business is one that will not admit of delay," said Dr. McGill, in a hurried voice.

"Sit down, doctor. Have a cup of coffee?"

"Thanks; no. Permit me to explain my errand. Dr. Seton is extremely ill—dying, in fact. He had a fit of apoplexy two days ago. Yesterday, toward evening, he rallied a little, recovered consciousness, and, in an imperfect degree, his speech. But, in the course of the night, some injudicious person suddenly informed him of the unexpected return of Lieutenant Douglas, who was supposed to have been murdered by the Indians. The shock was, for some unknown reason, so great as to cause a very dangerous, and, I fear, fatal relapse. But this morning he has again rallied a little, and contrived to make me understand that he must see Mr. Douglas and Lady Linlithgow immediately; for that he has a communication to make to them, of the most vital importance. Of course, your lordship, under such circumstances, neither the young gentleman nor the young lady will deny the request of a dying man."

"Most assuredly not," answered the marquis, who had listened with fixed attention to the hurried account given by Dr. McGill. "David, order the carriage around instantly. Eglantine, my dear, go and get ready as quickly as possible. I will myself attend you to the bedside of Dr. Seton. His request may be only a dying man's whim, but it must not be neglected."

Eglantine, who, for reasons of her own, had listened with breathless attention and pallid cheeks to Dr. McGill's words, arose and hurried from the room, followed by Lady Margaret Douglas.

She had scarcely disappeared when Mr. William Douglas was announced.

"Ah, Douglas, you are just in time. Such a strange event! Dr. Seton, who is dying, has sent a message, requiring the presence of Eglantine and yourself at his bedside, to hear some important communication that he has to make to you," said the marquis, cordially shaking the hand of the young gentleman, who looked very much surprised.

But Eglantine appeared, and the carriage was announced at the same instant.

"Take her to the carriage, Douglas, and I will follow," said the marquis, good-naturedly.

The young husband drew his wife's hand within his arm, pressed it affectionately, and led her out, followed by the marquis.

When they were seated in the carriage, the marquis ordered the coachman to drive as fast as possible to the village of Seton. A rapid drive of an hour's length brought them to their destination.

They alighted before Dr. Seton's door, and were at once admitted into the house and shown to his darkened sickroom.

Dr. McGill went and opened one of the windows, admitting the light into the chamber. And then the visitors approached the bed where the sick man lay, apparently in the stupor that precedes death. On the other side of the bed stood his housekeeper and his young medical assistant.

"Leave the room, you two, for a few minutes," said Dr. McGill.

And the housekeeper and the student withdrew.

Then Dr. McGill stooped and spoke to the dying man, saying:

"Seton, here are the young people whom you sent for."

The dying man slowly and heavily opened his eyes, and recognizing Eglantine and William Douglas, struggled to speak; but failed, for the faculty of speech had left him.

Dr. McGill poured out a restorative, and put it to his

lips, but he choked, for the power of swallowing was also gone.

Yet he was perfectly and most painfully conscious, for he struggled again and again to confess the secret that was burdening his conscience; and, failing again and again to do so, he turned his dying eyes, full of unutterable agony, on the face of Eglantine, and kept them so till they became fixed in death.

And thus the only one in all the world who knew the existence of Eglantine's son left the world, taking the secret with him.

CHAPTER IX.

BURIED AND MARRIED.

"He is gone!" said the marquis, solemnly. "Come away, my child." And he led Eglantine out of the room, followed by William Douglas.

He left behind him a wailing group, for the doctor was well beloved by his small household.

He led his niece to the front parlor, and sat her down on an easy chair. She was pale, faint and almost entirely overcome.

She was, for one so young, very familiar with death. She had seen her father die, then her mother, and lastly her good old tutor; but there was something more than sorrow and solemnity in this death; there was horror—the horror of a soul passing away burdened with a secret it had labored and agonized to divulge, without success. She dropped back on her chair, almost ready to swoon. Lord Shetland and Mr. Douglas stood over her. There chanced to be a decanter of port wine standing on the table. Mr. Douglas stepped up to it, poured out a glass full, and brought it to her. At his request, she sipped half the contents of the glass, and in a few moments felt its reviving effects.

"Now," suggested the marquis, "as my niece Eglantime is the nearest of kin to the deceased, and as I am

her guardian, acting for her, to make necessary arrangements for the funeral, you will oblige me, Douglas, by taking Eglantine home. You can afterward order fresh horses put to the carriage and send it back for me."

Young Douglas saw through and appreciated the motive of the marquis, and with all his lover heart thanked the old man for his kindness in affording him such an excellent opportunity for a *tête-à-tête* with his beloved as their long journey would insure.

Eglantine also seemed even more revived by this prospect than by the wine. She lifted her head, finished her glass, and then accep dte,mloJ shrdlu pauo ished the glass, and then accepted the arm William Douglas offered to lead her to the carriage.

When they were seated and the order was given to drive back to Torsach Castle, and the door was closed and the carriage in motion, William Douglas put his arms around his wife's waist and drew her to his bosom, murmuring:

"Oh, my dearest! my dearest! this blessed meeting make up for all."

Too full of emotion for any words, she dropped her head upon his shoulder and wept tears of mingled joy and sorrow, which from time to time he wiped or kissed away.

At length, when she grew more composed, she lifted her head and repeated the first words she had spoken to him on their first reunion.

"Oh, Willie! Willie! I have been faithful to you at heart, notwithstanding all."

"I am sure that you have, my own dearest love," he replied.

"And you do not reproach me, and you do not suspect me, even though you found me on the eve of marriage with Lord Ornoch! Oh, Willie!"

"You, like all others, believed me dead. Then you, still a very young and very gentle girl, yielded to the irresistible power of those who still had authority over you. I understand it all, dear love," he softly answered.

"Oh, Willie! dearest, there was something more than authority exercised," she sobbed.

"More than authority?" questioned Douglas, frowning.

"There was held over me the—what shall I say?—not the threat, but the impending fall of a deep dishonor, and not on me only, but on mine ancient name!"

" 'Dishonor!' Eglantine?"

"Yes; for you know they said our English marriage was not legal, since it was contracted between minors, without the consent of their parents or guardians."

"It was legal! The Marquis of Shetland himself declared it to be so!" indignantly exclaimed young Douglas.

"Yes, dearest, when you publicly acknowledged it in Scotland, it was made legal; but until you did that it was not so," gently observed Eglantine.

"Ah! and so they told you I was dead and could never acknowledge our marriage. And so they terrified you into consenting to another marriage which, in the peasant's language, would make 'an honest woman' of you. Ugh!" exclaimed Douglas in extreme disgust.

"Have patience, dear Willie! All things considered, were they not right?" gently suggested Eglantine.

William Douglas did not answer. He was grinding his teeth, but whether he was grinding the problem, or grinding, in imagination, those who first propounded it to Eglantine was not quite clear.

"Willie," she whispered at length, "there was something else that complicated matters. There was—a child."

"A child!" he echoed, in a sudden and strange commingling of emotions.

She hid her face upon his shoulder and wept.

"Where is the child?" at length he murmured.

"Until to-day, I believed him to be in heaven. Now I doubt."

"For Heaven's sake, dear Eglantine, speak more clearly!" cried Douglas, deeply agitated.

"Dr. Seton attended me in my confinement, and also took away our child to put it out to nurse. I was ill

and delirious for many days after its birth. When I came to myself and asked for my child, I was told that it was dead, and that it was best it should be so."

"The brutes!"

"Nay, you know you were supposed to have been murdered, and our marriage unacknowledged."

"Well, dearest—what next?"

"I believed them! I believed my child to be dead until to-day. To-day, since I have heard that Dr. Seton on his deathbed, hearing of your return, anxiously desired to see you and me together, to divulge some secret nearly concerning us both, I believe that my child still lives—my poor disowned and forsaken child, that I thought was in heaven!" cried Eglantine, dropping her head on her husband's shoulder and bursting into tears.

"There; I will weep no more, dear Willie. I will go to Aunt Shetland and question her again," said Eglantine, wiping her eyes.

And during the rest of their ride, Eglantine gave a more detailed account of all that had happened to herself during the long absence of her husband, and then, in turn, she received from him the history of his own dreary captivity among the Indians of the plains.

It was quite late in the afternoon when they got back to Trosach Castle.

When the young people entered the morning-parlor, they found there Lady Margaret Douglas alone.

She arose smilingly to greet them.

"Where is my Aunt Shetland, dear Meg?" inquired Eglantine.

"She returned to her own room, immediately after receiving the adieus of the Ornochs," answered Lady Margaret.

"Is she not well?" uneasily inquired Eglantine.

Lady Margaret smiled.

"She is well, I think—in health, at least," she said.

"But not in temper," added Mr. Douglas, with an answering smile.

"Well or ill, I must see her immediately, if possible. Willie, I cannot rest for a moment in the suspense and

anxiety I have been suffering ever since the doctor failed to communicate his secret to us."

"Ah, the doctor! I hope you found him better," put in Lady Margaret.

"We left him dead," answered Mr. Douglas, gravely.

"Ah, poor man! I never knew him, but I have always heard him well spoken of."

"Willie, stay here and improve you acquaintance with our kinswoman, while I go and find my aunt," said Eglantine in a low voice, as she passed out of the room.

She went upstairs, and then straight to the door of the anteroom leading to Lady Shetland's private apartments. The door was fastened; but when Eglantine knocked it was opened by Gillis, Lady Shetland's own woman.

"I wish to see my aunt," said Eglantine, perceiving that the woman held the door ajar, and stood within it as if to bar entrance.

"I beg your pardon, me leddy, but her leddyship hae forbidden me to admit any one this morning," said the woman respectfully.

Eglantine slept long that night, and when she reached the breakfast-room next morning she found it quite empty. She seated herself before the solitary cover and then rang for breakfast. It was promptly served and soon dispatched. And then Eglantine went off to the library, as the most likely place at that hour to find her uncle, who was now the most powerful, if not the most disinterested, friend she had in the family.

She found him closeted with William Douglas.

Both gentlemen arose at her entrance, and Mr. Douglas embraced her and led her to a seat at the same table with themselves.

"Mr. Douglas and myself have come to an understanding, my love," began the marquis. "We see by this morning's paper that his regiment is ordered to India. Now, as the question of your going out with him to risk your life and health in that infernal climate is not for a moment to be entertained, and, as, after

so long a separation and so brief a reunion, the thought of his leaving you again is not for an instant to be considered as possible, I have advised him to sell out his commission, and retire from the army; and for your sake he has consented to do so."

"Oh, I am so glad, and so grateful! I had forgotten all about the hateful regiment and his obligation to report for duty. But now I am so glad! I never even thought of it, until you informed me he is going to sell out," said Eglantine, gleefully.

"And now for the rest, my very imprudent boy and girl; though your English marriage, privately performed in London while you were both still minors, publicly acknowledged in Scotland, now that one of you has attained his majority, may be, and really is, so binding on you both, in Scotland, that it could not be broken, yet it may not be held so valid in England. You will have large possessions and interests in both kingdoms. Therefore I deem it necessary that the marriage ceremony should be again formally solemnized between you, according to the ritual of the Church of England. It should be done at once by special license. So, if you please, we will start for London without loss of time—I, you, Douglas and any attendant you may wish to select. Lady Shetland, I grieve to say, cannot leave her guests to go with us."

Neither of the young people said that they could easily dispense with her ladyship's company, but both perhaps thought so.

"I may as well tell you, Eglantine," continued the marquis, "that I have talked over the matter with Lady Shetland, and she favors my views so much as even to express some regret that she cannot be your chaperon to London."

Here Eglantine looked so astonished that the marquis smiled, and added:

"Ah, well, I did not mean to give you a riddle to solve, so I will even solve it for you. I proposed to her ladyship another, and even a wealthier bride, for her favorite nephew. Yes, Eglantine, you may open your

eyes, but there is an heiress now in England of double your wealth. What do you think of that?"

"I should be very glad if Lord Ornoch should marry any lady who would be likely to make him happy. But who is she, then, uncle, dear?"

"Miss Chimboza, the daughter of General Chimboza, of the Honorable East India Company's service. The general married a begum of enormous, of fabulous wealth. She brought him several hundred millions of pounds, and several children, but all the latter died except the youngest—this girl, Hinda—whom he sent to England to be brought up. She was educated at a first-class ladies' school at Brighton. The general has retired from the army, and come with his dark wife to spend the remainder of his life in England. They have taken their daughter from school, and are now all three stopping at the Morley House in London. You are aware that there is scarcely anybody left in London at this season, and so, of course, they see but very little society. But, as the general had been my classmate at college, as soon as I saw his arrival announced, I called to see him. And, of course, there being no one else in London, as I told you, we soon renewed our intimacy."

"Is Miss Chimboza pretty? Tell me how she—the heiress, looks?" said Eglantine.

"I shall leave that for you to say. And, now," concluded the marquis, looking at his watch, "I ordered the carriage to be at the door immediately after lunch to take us to Seton, so as to be in time to meet the Stirling coach. We may thus reach Glasgow in time to secure the night express train to London. You have three hours, Eglantine. Can you be ready in that time?"

"I could be ready in less than half that time," said the young lady, flying off to announce the sudden journey to old Elspeth, whom she had resolved to take with her.

CHAPTER X.

A MEETING AT THE CHURCH.

Lady Shetland had a brief interview with Eglantine, in which she expressed regret that she could not accompany the young people and witness the marriage ceremony, but hoped that all manner of good luck would follow.

Eglantine accepted her ladyship's regrets with all sincerity, but she upset the calm of the interview by suddenly asking:

"Oh, Aunt Shetland, pray tell me, does that poor child of mine still live?"

But Lady Shetland was equal to the occasion, and she answered, according to her own belief, that the child was indeed dead.

"Then what could have been the doctor's secret?" inquired Eglantine, meditatively.

"Who can tell? No secret at all, perhaps. A dying man's dream, most probably. Give yourself no further concern about it, Eglantine."

"I cannot so easily dismiss the subject from my mind. Aunt Shetland, were it possible for a departed spirit to return to this world, I think that man's spirit would return to tell the secret he tried and failed to tell in life!" said Eglantine, solemnly.

"What nonsense you talk, my dear! Come in!"

The last words were addressed to some one without, who was knocking at the door.

Lady Margaret Douglas walked into the room.

"You have come to bid me good-by, Meg. I thank you, dear; but I would not have gone without seeing you," said Eglantine, smiling.

"No; I have come to ask leave to go with you. I have just received a letter from my father, calling me to him," said Lady Margaret.

"He is no worse, I hope," said the marchioness and Eglantine in a breath.

"Oh, no; only 'wearying,' he says, to see his 'little

Maggie.' He adds, that I may return here again in a few days, to complete my visit. Now, may I go with you?" asked Lady Margaret.

"'May' you go with me, dear Meg? Of course, I shall be overjoyed to have you!" answered Eglantine, emphasizing her reply by catching and kissing her friend.

"Besides, I promised to be your bridesmaid, you know. And, as I am in the secret, and, as, no matter how quietly the ceremony may be performed, you may want one attendant at your marriage, I think I must keep my word," added Lady Margaret, archly.

"You are a darling, Meg, and I am delighted," replied Eglantine; "but you are quite prepared?" she inquired, dubiously.

"Oh, quite! My maid has packed up all I need for the journey, and is waiting outside with my hat and cloak on her arm."

"And you are really going to leave us so suddenly, Lady Margaret?" inquired the marchioness, with a show of regret as sincere as it was polite.

"Only for a few days, dear Lady Shetland. Then I shall be so pleased to come back, if you will permit me."

"You are a dear, good girl! And we shall look for your return with much pleasure. And now we will go down. The lunch bell rang five minutes since," said the marchioness, leading the way.

When they left the table the carriage was announced. Their adieus were soon said. And then the marquis with Lady Margaret Douglas, and Lieutenant Douglas with Eglantine, entered the carriage that was to take them to the village of Seton to meet the stage coach.

Eglantine's nurse, Lady Margaret's maid, the marquis' valet, and Mr. Douglas' groom followed in a chaise.

They reached Stirling in good time to catch the train for Glasgow, where they took a whole compartment in a first-class carriage of the night express train for London.

It was very early in the morning, and the rising sun

was just struggling through the fog, when the train slackened speed and ran slowly into the station.

They went across to the hotel and engaged apartments. The gentlemen each found a comfortable chamber, and the two young ladies took a double bedded room together. And the whole party separated and retired to rest, and enjoyed several hours of very refreshing sleep.

At nine o'clock they all met again at breakfast in a private parlor. And, after breakfast, they ordered two cabs and drove to the Morley House, where they engaged apartments for several days.

As it was still too early to see the Chimbozas, the marquis, after seeing the two young ladies comfortably settled in their apartments, took young Douglas and drove off to Doctors' Commons to procure a special license for the immediate marriage of the lovers.

Eglantine and Lady Margaret sat together in their bedroom, watching old Elspeth and young Flora, Lady Margaret's maid, unpack their wardrobe.

"We have been negligent, dear Meg. We should have gone first to Cavendish Square to inquire for your father. I am very sorry we did not; but the error shall be repaired as soon as my uncle returns," said Eglantine.

"That will be quite time enough, dear. Had it been possible to see my dear papa earlier, I should myself have suggested that you should set me down at his lodgings; but he never rises till afternoon," replied Lady Margaret.

The young ladies then changed their traveling suits for morning dresses, and went into their private parlor to await the return of the gentlemen.

They had to wait much longer than they expected. It was one o'clock, post meridian, when the marquis and Mr. Douglas came in.

"We have been the rounds!" said the marquis, as he dropped into a chair. "First to Doctors' Commons, where we procured a special license; next to Hanover Square, to call on the rector of St. George's to engage his services for to-morrow at eleven o'clock; then to

Cavendish Square, to see our friend the duke and to report our arrival, my dear, and also to ask him to be one of our witnesses at the marriage to-morrow."

"I hope you found dear papa improving, sir?" said Lady Margaret.

"Improving so fast, my dear, that he promised to join us at the church to-morrow, in behalf of his kinsman and heir-at-law, Willie here! Also, he sends by me his permission to you to remain with your young friend, Eglantine, until after the marriage; furthermore, he insists that Mr. Douglas shall be his guest in the interim. So this young gentleman will only stop to dine with us and then return to Cavendish Square, whence the duke will bring him in his own carriage to the church."

As the marquis spoke there came a rap at the door, followed, on permission given, by the entrance of the waiter.

"Send my own servant here," said his lordship.

In a few moments the marquis' man made his appearance.

"Give me a card, dear," said his lordship. And when Eglantine had produced the litle slip of pasteboard from her card-case, he added it to his own, put both into an envelope, and gave them to his servant, saying:

"Here, take these to General Chimboza's apartments."

The man bowed and went on his errand.

"I have penciled a line asking the Chimbozas to call on us as soon as may be convenient to them," said the marquis, in explanation.

He had scarcely ceased to speak when the door was opened and:

"General Chimboza," announced.

A fine, tall, broad-shouldered, martial-looking old man he was, with a noble face, once fair, but now deeply bronzed by the Indian sun, and framed in with a full suit of flowing, snow-white hair and beard. He advanced, smiling, with both hands outstretched toward the marquis, who arose and went to meet him.

"I am equally pleased and surprised to see you back so soon," said the general, cordially shaking the hands of the marquis.

"Thanks. I hope I find you quite well?"

"Never better in my life."

"And Mrs. and Miss Chimboza?"

"Capital, both of them. They are out shopping. I think they will never tire of shopping. If we do not find a settled home soon, we shall have to 'warehouse' their purchases. But I am wondering all this time to see you back," added the general, in a half interrogative manner.

"I will tell you the whole of my errand presently. A part of it is to bring you an invitation from Lady Shetland, praying that you and Mrs. and Miss Chimboza will honor us with your company at Trosach Castle for a few weeks. Come! I even hope to take you back with me."

"Thanks, old friend! That would be a capital programme. And, in fact, I do not know why we have stopped in town so long while looking about for an opportunity of purchasing a country seat, unless it is that, after India, we do not find London so hot as others complain that it is."

"You will find it cool enough in the Highlands," said the marquis. "But come, let me introduce you to my young friends," he added, taking the general across the room, and presenting him to Lady Linlithgow, Lady Margaret Douglas and Lieutenant Douglas.

The general politely expressed his pleasure at forming their acquaintance, and his regret that his own ladies happened to be out of the house at this moment, but his assurance that they would call as soon as they should come in.

After a little more conversation the general took his friend across to his sunny smoking-room and there the marquis told him why the lovers had been brought to town and the reason for a quiet wedding.

The general expressed his readiness to assist as a witness at the ceremony and promised to be on hand

at eight o'clock that evening with his wife and daughter.

And then the marquis took leave.

He returned to the drawing-room of his own party, where he found lunch and the ladies waiting for him.

After lunch, the marquis and the young lieutenant went out again on business touching the connection of the latter with his regiment. They found that the place of William Douglas had been supplied for many months past by a young gentleman who had been gazetted as:

"Mr. Augustus Ibbetson, commissioned lieutenant in the ——— Regiment of Foot, vice Mr. William Douglas, dead."

But as Mr. Douglas had come to life again, there were certain forms to be observed before he could be free to go upon his bridal tour. These were attended to that afternoon; and then William Douglas returned with an easy mind to spend the evening with his friends.

They dined *en famille.*

After dinner they remained in waiting to receive the Chimbozas.

At eight o'clock punctually, and according to promise, the visitors were announced. And the general and Mrs. and Miss Chimboza entered the room. The general we have already described. Mrs. Chimboza was a tall, very stout and very dark woman, with a quantity of blue-black curls heaped up on her forehead, under many folds of a fine white India muslin turban. And, although this was midsummer, her form was covered with a gorgeous camel's hair shawl, worth a small principality. This slid from her shoulders as she seated herself, revealing a richly bejeweled dress, half English, half Indian in style, and altogether indescribable.

Miss Chimboza was singularly beautiful, with a tall and slender form, an elegant and graceful mien, a small, shapely head, covered with silky, jet-black ringlets that hung down far below her girdle; with clear, dark complexion, and delicate and regular features.

She wore a dress that was well suited to her singular style of beauty—an Indian fabric of thin, black tissue, sprigged with slight gold flowers, and a single large blazing ruby on her bosom.

Our young people were struck with surprise; and not more by the exceeding beauty of the young Anglo-Indian, as by its great peculiarity. They almost expected to find something *bizarre* in her manners as there certainly was in her personal appearance; but Miss Chimboza had been brought up and educated in a fashionable young ladies' boarding-school at Brighton and she talked and acted much as other well-bred girls do.

The evening passed very pleasantly for all parties.

The litle company separated at a late hour. The Chimbozas went to their own apartments, Mr. Douglas to Cavendish Square, and our own party to their several rooms to prepare by a good night's rest for the great event of the morning.

Lady Linlithgow and Lady Margaret Douglas, from choice, occupied together the same suite of apartments, consisting of bed-chamber, dressing-room and bath-room.

They arose early in the morning, and had a tray of tea and toast brought to them in their room. After partaking of this refreshment, they put themselves in the hands of their attendants to be dressed for the coming ceremony.

When they reached the church and drew up before its entrance, they found other carriages there—those of the Duke of Cheviot and of General Chimboza. Their occupants had already alighted from them and gone into the church.

The marquis conducted his fair charges into the vestibule of the church, where they found the Duke of Cheviot, Lieutenant Douglas and Captain Francis Harry, of the Royal Guards, waiting for them.

The marquis presented the duke to his future niece. His grace saluted Eglantine, and said that he should be happy to welcome her into the Douglas family. He then embraced his daughter, Lady Margaret, and

finally presented them to both, Captain Francis Harry, who had come to act as best man to the bridegroom.

Then the bridal procession formed in the following order: Captain Francis Harry and Lady Margaret Douglas, as best man and bridesmaid; Lieutenant William Douglas and Lady Linlithgow, bridegroom and bride; the Duke of Cheviot and the Marquis of Shetland.

The procession passed up the middle aisle and formed in a semi-circle before the altar, where the rector and his clerk were awaiting the bridal party. In a front pew sat the Chimbozas, looking on with interest upon the first English wedding they had been called to witness for many years.

The ceremony commenced and proceeded with due solemnity.

At its close, when the bridegroom had saluted his bride, the Duke of Cheviot again took her in his arms, kissed her and welcomed her into his family. The Chimbozas came forward with hearty congratulations. And then the whole party proceeded to the vestry to set their signatures to the marriage register. After this, and after a few more congratulations and kindly wishes, they all left the church to re-enter their carriages.

There was, for some unforeseen reason, some little delay in bringing up Mr. Douglas' carriage, so that really all the little company were seated in their respective equipages before Mr. Douglas' carriage could come up. While the bridegroom and the bride stood together waiting for it, Eglantine's ear was caught by the plaintive wail of a young child—a wail that went to her heart.

She turned her eyes in the direction whence the sound came, and she saw, sitting upon the curbstone, a beggar woman, having upon her lap the most pitiable object, the bride thought, she had ever seen in her life—a poor litle babe some four or five months old, so pale and thin, and such a mere skeleton, that its little fair head seemed preternaturally large, as it lay over the knee of the woman, and hung back as by its own

weight. A fair, sweet face it had, with a look of patient suffering on it that only holy infancy can wear.

Eglantine obeyed an irresistible impulse, and left her husband's side to approach the infant.

The woman who had it in charge, seeing the lady draw near, stretched out an emaciated hand and raised a pair of large, black, fierce, hungry-looking eyes to her face, and whined:

"A penny, for the love of the Lord, my lady."

"Yes, yes," said Eglantine, hastily taking out her purse, but never removing her eyes from the baby, whose pure wan face and helpless, hanging head so deeply moved her pity—"yes, yes; but, oh! do lift that poor baby's head on your arm and support it. See how painfully it droops!" she added, as she put a few silver coins in the hand of the woman.

"Come, my dear Eglantine; our carriage is ready at last," said Mr. Douglas, who had followed his bride, and stood unobserved until now, by her side.

"Yes, yes, in a moment," said the lady, who could not at once tear herself away from the pathetic scene before her. And she stooped and put her own delicately-gloved hand under the baby's fair head, and raised it into an easier position on the woman's lap. And as she did so she met the clear, blue eyes of the little one turned full upon hers with that mute, pathetic look that is so touching in suffering infancy.

Eglantine burst into tears, and emptied her purse in the lap of the baby, saying to the woman:

"Oh, get it clean clothes and nice food and medicines, and whatever it may need, and——"

"Come, come, Eglantine, my love!" impatiently urged the bridegroom.

"Yes, in one instant." Then, turning to the woman with a last word, she said:

"Leave your name and address with the sexton of this church. Say I told you to do so; and I will look you up when I come back! Now, then, Willie, I will go," she added, wiping her eyes and lowering her veil.

"My dear, impulsive Eglantine!" said Mr. Douglas,

when they were once more seated together in their carriage, "if you succor to such an extent every beggar and every beggar's babe in London, you will have your hands and heart and life full."

"I wish to Heaven I could, Willie! Oh, why are innocent children called to suffer so much!" she sighed, gazing from the window of her carriage upon the pathetic face of the babe, that haunted her, and continued to haunt her, for many a day. And well it might, for it was the face of her own outcast, disowned, unknown child!

CHAPTER XI.

THE HAUNTING LITTLE FACE.

On arriving at the Morley House, Mr. Douglas conducted his bride to the drawing-room of the private suite of apartments appropriated to her own party, and where the few wedding guests were assembled.

Lady Margaret Douglas met her at the door, and took her away at once to the chamber, to take off her hat and veil for the breakfast that was laid in the private dining-room.

"I declare, you have been weeping!" said Lady Margaret, as she gazed into the tear-stained countenance of her friend.

"Well, and why not? Is it not indeed *de riguer* that a bride should weep?" inquired Eglantine, smiling through her tears.

"I suppose so; but it is also *de riguer* that a bride should look 'never so beautiful' as on her bridal day; and red eyes are not beautiful; so just bathe them in rose water, and then come down with me to breakfast," said Lady Margaret.

Eglantine followed her advice, and then went down into the drawing-room, attended by Lady Margaret.

There again she was received with affectionate congratulations, and soon the doors of the adjoining room were thrown open, displaying an elegantly appointed breakfast table.

Mr. Douglas gave his arm to his bride, Captain Frank Harry gave his to the bridesmaid, the Duke of Cheviot escorted the begum, the Marquis of Shetland led Miss Chimboza, and General Chimboza followed with Miss Judson, later governess and now companion to the heiress, and in this order they entered the breakfast room and sat down to the table, the Marquis of Shetland presiding at one end, having on his right hand the bride and groom and on his left the bridesmaid and groomsman; the Duke of Cheviot presiding at the other end, having on his right hand the begum and General Chimboza and on his left Miss Judson.

The party was small but merry; a due proportion of cake was eaten and wine drank in honor of the bride and bridegroom; speeches were made and toasts were offered, and so the feast was protracted until the striking of the clock warned the newly-married pair that it was time for them to prepare to start, in order to catch the express train.

They arose from the table.

Lady Margaret Douglas attended Lady Linlithgow to her chamber, where the later put on her gray traveling hat, veil and gloves.

They then went downstairs, where their friends were waiting to take leave of them.

Their baggage had already gone forward to the station, under the charge of Elspeth and James. And they had nothing to do but to bid good-by to their circle and enter the fly that was engaged to take them to the station. Their desination was Penzance, on the coast of Cornwall, where they proposed to spend the honeymoon.

After the departure of the bride and bridegroom, the Duke of Cheviot arose to take leave, with the intention of taking his daughter, Lady Margaret Douglas, with him.

"But your grace will remember that our bright Lady Margaret is pledged, with your permission to return with me to Trosach Castle. Lady Shetland will expect her," said the marquis, affectionately retaining the hand of his young favorite.

The duke looked fondly down upon the child of his old age, and hesitated.

"You do not like to part with her again. And neither would you like to make her break her word. Well, then, there is but one way. Your grace is certainly able to travel now. You must, therefore, be pleased to accept our often-urged invitation to spend a few weeks with us at Trosach Castle," said the marquis.

The duke looked from the cordial face of his would-be host to the pleading eyes of his daughter, and then answered:

Well, well; thanks! I think I may inflict myself and my infirmities upon you for a season. Good-morning. You and your friends dine with us to-morrow evening, remember—eight o'clock. Come, Maggie." And so saying, his grace bowed to the circle and led his daughter from the room.

One pair of eyes, full of admiration, followed the young lady. They belonged to Captain Francis Harry, of the Royal Guards.

The Marquis of Shetland noticed this, and good-naturedly determined to add the young guardsman to his summer party in the Highlands. So when the captain, after a little polite delay at the side of Miss Chimboza, made his retiring bow, the marquis said:

"By the way, Harry, it would give me great pleasure to see you at Trosach Castle. The game is plentiful there, and really requires a little trimming. You like field sports?"

"Who does not?" laughed the young officer.

"Then come and shoot over my moors. This is the very last of July, you know, and in September the sport is very fine."

"Thanks, marquis. I should indeed take much pleasure in accepting your frank invitation, if I could get leave."

"Is there any doubt about that? Then I will get you leave. My word is still worth something at headquarters," said the marquis.

The young guardsman thanked him again, bowed and withdrew.

"There," said the marquis to himself, "I maneuvered that as well as any matchmaking old dowager of them all could have done. Mag is beautiful and high-born, but portionless. He is the heir-at-law of his granduncle, old Elphinstone of Harewood, and will some day come into a cool thirty thousand a year."

The Marquis of Shetland remained five days longer in London, waiting the convenience of his invited company, who were to be his fellow-travelers.

At length, on the Saturday, the party, consisting of the Duke of Cheviot, with the Lady Margaret Douglas, the general, with Mrs. and Miss Chimboza and Miss Judson, Captain Frank Harry and their host, the Marquis of Shetland, met by mutual appointment in the first-class waiting room of the railway station. This company of eight persons engaged an entire compartment of a first-class carriage for themselves, and so formed a very sociable and pleasant traveling party for that long northern journey.

It passed without incident worth recording, unless the devotion of the gallant young guardsman to the beautiful Lady Margaret Douglas, a devotion that was noticed without disapprobation by her friends, might be deemed worthy of mention.

It was late when they arrived at Trosach Castle.

The guests staying at the house had all retired to rest. But Lady Shetland, who expected the party, was waiting up to welcome them. Supper was also laid in the small dining-room. And the bedchambers of the travelers were ready for them.

Lady Shetland received this large accession to her company with her usual courtesy. She shook hands with General Chimboza and Captain Harry, and welcomed them to Trosach Castle. She kissed Lady Margaret Douglas, and whispered that Lady Margaret was at home, and knew where to find her suite of rooms, which were quite prepared for her; and then she

turned to Mrs. and Miss Chimboza, and herself attended them to their apartments.

The travelers reassembled at the supper table, where they did full justice to the luxuries set before them.

Then, as they were all fatigued from their long journey, with mutual "good-nights" they separated and retired to rest.

A large party assembled in the breakfast room the next morning. The Chimbozas and Captain Harry were presented to the other guests. The striking beauty of Hinda Chimboza created an instantaneous sensation, as Lady Shetland had predicted that it would.

The young people of the party were all out on the open ground lying between the castle and the lake, engaged in their favorite morning pastime of archery, when Lord Ornoch's boat was seen crossing the lake in the direction of Trosach Castle.

As soon as the boat touched the land, the young earl, leaving it to the care of his oarsmen, leaped ashore and walked toward the castle.

He raised his hat as he joined the archery party.

Lady Margaret Douglas presented him to her friend, Miss Chimboza, and she noted with secret delight his involuntary gaze of admiration, which was, however, quickly withdrawn.

Lady Margaret challenged the earl to take a part in their game, and compete with them for the prize.

He smilingly assented, and took from the hands of an attending groom a bow and a quiver of arrows.

"We have not one of us hit the bull's-eye yet, you see," said Lady Margaret, pointing to the distant target, whose every circle was well specked with arrow marks, but whose center was intact.

Lord Ornoch selected an arrow, fitted it to his bow, and took his place in the group of competitors to wait his turn.

"What is to be the prize?" he inquired of his fair friend.

"A small golden arrow set with diamonds," said Lady Margaret.

"And what would be the use of such a toy?" he smilingly inquired.

"Oh, of none at all to a gentleman. But to a lady it might serve as a brooch, a buckle, or even as a hair-pin. There! Now, it's your turn, my lord. See if you can hit the center!" she added.

The young earl raised his bow, took aim, drew the string, and let the arrow fly.

It quivered in the very center of the circle.

"He has hit the bull's-eye!"

"Just in the pupil!"

"He has won!"

"The prize is Lord Ornoch's!" exclaimed some half-dozen young voices, all speaking at once.

Lady Shetland held the prize in her hands.

The archers by acclamation awarded it to Lord Ornoch, as the successful competitor.

The marchioness beckoned him to approach, and, with some few appropriate words, put it in his hands.

He bowed his acknowledgments, and then, looking around and seeing Hinda Chimboza standing apart, he went up to her, and, with a deep bow, begged her to honor him by wearing the jewel his shaft had won.

And Lady Shetland, who, from her seat, saw the look of admiration with which the offering was made, and the blush of delight with which it was accepted, augured well for her matrimonial scheme.

After the archery meeting was over, the whole party returned to the house to lunch.

During the remainder of that day, and during the few days that followed, Lady Shetland had reason to congratulate herself on the fair prospects of her favorite nephew.

"Ornoch may not be able to forget Eglantine soon, but he is certainly very much pleased with Miss Chimboza and as for the girl herself, she is over head and ears in love with him," her ladyship remarked to Lord Shetland one morning when their young guests had lef them *tête-à-tête* in the drawing-room.

"Yes; I agree with you. And Chimboza looks favorably on the prospect of a match between his heiress

and the young earl. He is willing to gild the coronet with his gold, if only the coronet rests upon the brow of his daughter. But, my lady, there is another match brewing here; have you noticed?"

"You refer to Captain Harry and Lady Margaret Douglas?"

"Yes; and a very good match it will be. She has rank, beauty, title, but no money. He has an unblemished name, an honorable position, and will have wealth. He is the heir-at-law of his uncle, old Elphinstone of Harewood, and will come into a comfortable thirty thousand a year on the old man's death. And I have no doubt that if Harry marries a duke's daughter, Elphinstone will come down very handsomely in the way of settlements."

"He will have good reason to do so," remarked her ladyship.

"Now I may take credit for having made that match. I am getting to be quite an old woman at such maneuvering. It is diplomacy in its dotage, I suppose," laughed the ex-ambassador, jesting at his own expense.

Now, leaving the party assembled at Trosach Castle—the elders to their maneuverings, the youngers to their flirtations—and leaving also the newly-married pair of lovers in the full enjoyment of their honeymoon on the wild and beautiful coast of Cornwall, we must go down into the depths of human life to look after Eglantine's outcast child.

CHAPTER XII.

BABY BENNY.

The beggar, with the baby on her breast, remained seated on the curbstone, gazing after the retreating form of the lady who had relieved her necessities, until she saw her enter the carriage, and saw the carriage drive away.

Then she gathered up the silver and gold coins that had been scattered so freely upon her lap, and counted them.

"Two pounds ten in sovereigns and half sovereigns, and seven shillings and threepence in silver. Two pounds, seventeen shillings and threepence! Nearly three pounds! I never had so much money at one time in my life, except when that Scotch doctor gave me ten pounds. Ten pounds! It makes me gasp to think of it now—which he said the good Christian folk of his neighborhood had made up for me! I never believed him. And I never could guess why he gave me so much money; no, nor where the money came from. But one don't look a gift horse in the mouth. And, moreover, the money never did me any good, for it was stolen from me on board the *Shaft*. But this lady —why does she give me so much money? Ay, that's easy seen! She's from the country; any one can see that. She's not used to sights of misery, nor hardened by them. Any one could feel that. And she's rolling in wealth. Any one could see that. And she's a bride, as happy as the day is long! Any one can feel that. And so she can't abide the sight of poverty and suffering, and so she empties her purse into my lap. She'll not do the like again, I'll bet! She'll get used to the world. But now, while I think of it, I'll go and leave my name and dwelling-place with the sexton, as she bade me; and I'll be given in charge for my pains, maybe, and never hear any more of the open-handed lady," said the woman to herself, as she arose, laid the languid babe over her bosom, so that its head drooped over her shoulder, and so walked into the church.

The sexton, much surprised, wrote down her name with the utmost good-nature, though he considered it wise to "just mention that rich folk forget easily."

"Ay, she'll forget," sighed the woman; "but I ha' done as she bade me, anyway."

With which philosophical remark, she hitched her baby higher on her shoulder and departed for her squalid home in Junk lane.

The child, wearied with the walk, had fallen asleep

on her shoulder long before she reached the tenement where she lived.

She laid it down on the poor bed, and took the light shawl from her shoulder and covered it up.

Then she sat down in the rickety rocking-chair, and rocking herself slowly to and fro, began to sum up her case of Life *versus* Magdalene Hurst.

When but partially recovered from the united effects of her pneumonia and confinement, she had embarked on the steamer *Shaft* from Killford to London.

Two misfortunes befell her on that voyage home.

First, in the changeable April weather, she took a severe cold and had a serious relapse; next she was robbed of the ten pounds conscience money bestowed upon her by the doctor.

Thus she reached London, ill and penniless, and burdened with a young child.

Worse still, she found her aged mother bedridden with rheumatic fever, and obstinately determined not to go into the Union.

Up to the time of her daughter's return, the old creature had been provided for by "outside" parochial aid, and by the good offices of her fellow-lodgers of the tenement-house. After that, the parish aid was still continued; but, though the need was greater than ever, the poor fellow-lodgers withdrew their help, if not their sympathy.

Madge had a severe struggle with illness and poverty.

The broken state of her health precluded the possibility of her recovering her situation as stewardess of the *Shaft,* or indeed of obtaining any other employment.

With the very poor, it is but a step from enforced idleness to beggary, and too often but another step from beggary to crime, or to death.

One by one the poor pieces of furniture or of clothing went to the pawnbroker's, to be pledged for the few pence that was to procure dry bread upon which they subsisted from day to day.

Whenever Madge was able to walk, she crept out

with the child in her arms, and found her way to some populous thoroughfare, where she sat down upon some curbstone, beseeching a passenger for a penny, whenever she dared to do so, begging silently with every feature of her worn face, whenever she could not venture to ask charity in any other way.

And so from day to day, she picked up enough to keep two wretched souls and bodies together.

In June some relief came in this manner: the poor old mother grew better and went about again.

Madge Hurst wished that she and the child and all might die; but as Death does not often come when called for, being generally absent in some other scene where he is not at all wanted, she and her infant burden lived on and suffered on, until we found them on the curbstone near the front of St. George's Church, as has been related in a preceding chapter.

Now Madge sat in the rickety rocking-chair, summing up her case and counting up her money—nearly three pounds in all. She felt rich; she had never had so much money in her life before, except, as she said, when the doctor donated her ten pounds, which never did her any good, because the note had been stolen on the boat.

"Now I can get back my things from the pawnbrokers," she said; "and now I could put that baby out to nurse and get back my place as stewardess of the steamer, if only it wasn't for this horrid cough. I doubt if Captain Caird would take me with this cough! But, anyways, I can try, and I will try just as the steamer comes in again."

While she was thus ruminating, there was heard the heavy tramp of a man's step ascending the stairs.

It was much too common an occurrence in that closely crowded tenement-house, where the inmates were hourly passing up and down, and daily indulging in some drunken scuffle, to attract any attention from Madge.

Now, however, the steps ceased at her own door and were followed by a smart rap.

"Come in," said Madge, expecting to see some one of her rude and rather dangerous neighbors.

The latch was lifted, and a tall, strong, muscular-looking man, with a bull neck, a large head covered with a shock of red hair, and brutal features, somewhat relieved now by an expression of stupid good nature, entered the room.

Madge looked up, and recognized Tony Brice, one of the firemen engaged on the steamer *Shaft*.

"Well, Madge, old gal, I've found you at last," he said, seating himself without invitation upon the rickety table, which, thanks to the support of the wall, did not give way.

"Why, Tony, I'm surprised to see you here!" exclaimed the woman, staring at him, for he had never entered her doors before.

"And no ways glad to see me, I'm bound to say, Mrs. Hurst," put in Tony, twirling his old hat about.

"Nay, Tony; I never said that. I am glad to see you. I have too few friends in the world not to be glad to see them I have got."

"Thanky, lass. And I tell you this; you ain't got no better friend than me in this world. Don't you believe me?"

"I—yes, I believe you, Tony," said the woman, hesitatingly, for she was beginning to shrink from the friendly advances of her visitor.

He saw that shrinking, perhaps, and, stupid as he was, hastened to relieve her fears by saying:

"Well, and I wasn't going to intrude my company on you, Mrs. Hurst; leastways if I hadn't a had a message to bring to you."

"A message to bring me!" exclaimed the woman, in much surprise.

"Ay, lass, and a very particular one, too."

"A message! Is it from the captain? Does he want me to come back and be his stewardess again? I can, you know, if he wants me," said Madge, eagerly.

"Nay, it's not from the captain I bring you a message neither; not but what I think as he would like to have you back again, if so be you was well enough to

do the duties, for he hasn't got any one in your place, and seems to be a-keeping on it open for you. No; my message ain't from the captain, though it may bring you as much good luck as if it was. But it is not from the captain."

"Then, for the Lord's sake, who is it from? If there is any hope of good luck in it, don't keep it back a minute, but tell me at once," said Madge, impatiently.

"Well, then, it was from old mother Gaunt."

"Jean Gaunt, the old woman who nursed me through my sickness at Killford?"

"Ay, lass, that's her. The last time the boat stopped at Killford, on her voyage back to London, there comes on board an old woman, bent with age and weakness, and she asks if so be the stewardess, Magdalene Hurst, could be seen. I happened to be standing by, and told her that you had never been able to take your place since your bad illness."

"She nursed me through that. Go on."

"Yes; so she said. And then she asked did any one know where you lived, and would any one take a message to you. I told her there I was to the fore, quite at her service and yours, to fetch or to carry. And then she says, which these are her werry words:

"'Tell Magdalene Hurst,' says she, 'if so be she's only able to crawl, to leave everything else and take the baby and come aboard the steamer, and come direct to Killford by the next trip; for I have that to tell her which concerns her interests in this world, and mayhap in the next, too."

"That is very strange!" said Madge.

"Ay, it were, lass; and you'd a thought it was stranger still, if you'd seen that old woman's looks, and heard how she told her message over and over again, six or seven times at least, to beat it into my head."

"I think I ought to go," said Madge, hesitatingly.

"I think ye ought, lass; and as for the money to pay your passage, don't ye let that be a hindrance, so long as Tony Brice has his week's pay untouched," said the fireman, thrusting his hand deep into the recesses

of his trousers' pocket, and drawing forth a leathern purse, from which he poured out a handful of silver and copper coins. "There now, lass, help yourself."

"Thanky, Tony, all the same, but I have got some money and can pay my own way; not as I think the captain will be charging his old stewardess for one trip in the steerage of his boat. When does she sail again, Tony?"

"To-morrow morning at eight o'clock. And I wish I could come to fetch ye, old gal, but I shall be on the ingine."

"What need to fetch me, Tony? Don't I know the way to my own old ship?" said the woman, laughing.

At this moment there came a wail from the waking child on the bed.

Madge went and took it up, and sat down with it stretched upon her lap.

The man Brice got down from the table, and drew an old deal box from a corner up to the side of the woman, seated himself upon it, and looked attentively at the child.

"Madge," he said, at length, "you are as swarthy as any gypsy, with dark skin, black eyes, and black hair. Ben Hurst were, if anything, darker and blacker nor you. Black crows don't have white doves, you know! Now I want to know where this child's lily-white skin and blue eyes and yellow hair comes from?"

The total want of resemblance between the child and Madge, or her dead husband, had often been noticed by her neighbors, and not to her own credit.

"Drat the brat!" exclaimed Madge, with shame and rage. "You'll make me hate it! How can I help its looks. It looks as Nature made it look, I reckon. And I won't have you flinging out your slurs on me for it! The Lord knows I'm as poor as poverty can make me; I've been brought down to beg my bread in the streets; but for all that I've been an honest woman; and if anybody says I haven't—I'll kill 'em!"

She had thrown the frightened and screaming child upon the bed, and turned round upon the man. Her black eyes were burning and blazing, her nostrils were

expanded, her teeth clinched, and her lips drawn back and down like a wildcat in the act of springing.

The great red-headed brute of a fireman shrank away, appalled at the fury he had raised.

"There, there, there, there, lass! I know as you're an honest 'oman; everybody knows it. Don't holler till you're hurt, old gal, and don't mistreat the poor baby," he said, soothingly.

With a change as sudden as the fall of rain upon the flash of lightning and the clap of thunder, the woman burst into tears, and took up the child and began to soothe it tenderly.

"You ought to be beaten, you brute, for driving me mad with your slurs, and setting me against the poor child!"

"I know I ought, and you may beat me, Madge, as soon as is convenient. But now, I must go back to the boat. And you'll be on board on time to-morrow?"

"I'll be on board by seven o'clock," said the woman.

And Tony Brice went away, leaving Madge Hurst to soothe the child that was sobbing forth its fright and trouble on her stormy bosom.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HERITAGE OF MISERY.

Madge Hurst had just replaced the sleeping child on the wretched bed, when the door opened again, and a woman entered—a tall, dark woman, clothed in rags and bowed with age or infirmities, and leaning on a stick. She crossed the room, and sank down exhausted on the old hair trunk, and let her tattered shawl fall from her head and shoulders, revealing a tangled mass of iron-gray hair, that hung in elf-locks down her neck on each side of her swarthy and wrinkled visage.

"Why, mother, where's you cap and kerchief?" inquired the young woman, staring in painful surprise at the bared gray head.

"Parted with 'em, parted with 'em for a sup of rum, 'out which I should never a tottered home. Eh, Madge, lass," she said, rocking herself to and fro, "no luck to-day! There I've set the livelong day on the curbstone by the Church of St. Mary le Strand, watching the people go in and out the church. And no one of them dropped a penny into the palm of an old wife like me! And they think if they only go to church, they will go to heaven, the——"

And here the poor wretch, embittered by a long life of want and woe, exasperated by this last day of keen hunger and disappointment, broke forth into a torrent of profane and indecent invective, utterly unfit to be heard or read.

"Hush, hush, mother, for goodness' sake!" cried Madge, who, passionate and reckless as she was, felt shocked to hear such imprecations from lips that womanhood should have made decent, and age venerable. "Do hush, mother; and look here what I have got," she added, displaying her handful of coins.

"Eh, lass, what a lot!" cried the crone, opening wide her greedy eyes, and staring half in delight, half in doubt, as though she saw the money, yet distrusted her own sight, and while calculating its value, feared that it might vanish like a vision of the night, or turn to dry leaves like fairy gold.

Madge sat down on the side of the bed, and briefly told her mother of the young, beautiful and happy bride at St. George's Church, who, out of the wealth of her own prosperity of joy, gave so freely to the poor beggar with the baby at the gate.

"Welladay! I have heard of sich things in my life, but never did I believe in them till now," said the old woman, crossing her hands and lifting up her eyes. "And now, Madge, I think ye might be a leetle liberal, and buy some tea and white sugar, and a sup o' milk, and a loaf of white bread, and a rasher o' bacon and some eggs, Madge. And don't forget to take our frying-pan out of pawn. And, Madge, lass, remember to fetch some coals and a bundle of kindlings. And, Madge, hinny, whatever yer do, bring a bottle o' rum."

"Yes, I'll bring everything that is needful," said the young woman, as she left the room.

"Dearie me, it will be a feast," said the dame to herself, as she went to the cupboard and took from it a few cracked cups and saucers and plates, and arranged them on the table.

Meanwhile Madge went out upon her errand. Thick as a beehive with cells was this old tenement-house with human life. Madge Hurst's room opened upon a wide hall lighted by a sklight, and having four doors, two on the right and two on the left, opening from it into corresponding rooms.

And each of these rooms was tenanted by a separate family.

The one on the same side and in front of Madge's apartment was occupied by a seamstress and her bedridden sister.

The front room opposite to that contained an old couple and two young granddaughters, ballet girls at the Thespian Temple.

The room back of theirs and opposite to Madge's accommodated a stage carpenter and his wife and children.

The head of the staircase was at the back of the hall, and thus it was just between Madge's room and the stage carpenter's room.

Madge crossed the hall, and rapped at the door of the latter.

It was opened by a pale and poorly-clad woman, who had one babe in her arms and two clinging to her skirts.

"Good-e'en to you, Mrs. Juniper. Would you kindly lend me the loan of your big basket for half an hour, and drop in after that time to a cup of tea with me and mother?" inquired Madge of the pale woman.

"Thank ye kindly, Mrs. Hurst, and I'll do so; and yer heartily welcome to the basket. Fetch it, Billy," said the stage carpenter's wife, looking in upon her room and calling one of her children.

The lower rooms of this old rookery were occupied

on the right by an old clothes dealer, and on the left by a pawnbroker.

Madge went down to the ground floor and in through a side door to the pawnbroker's, where she proceeded to redeem a pot, a tea-kettle and a frying-pan, all of which she put into her big basket, while the well-satified Israelite behind the counter looked as if he secretly wondered how long it would be before these articles would be left in pledge again.

Madge then crossed the lower hall and entered by an opposite side door into the old clothes dealer's shop. Here she seemed to be well acquainted, for she accosted the woman behind the counter with:

"Well, Mrs. Kempton, and how is trade?"

"It is just so poor, Missus Hurst, that I'm thinking I'll have to send my Mary out to service," said the old-clothes woman.

"Ain't Mr. Kempton at work?"

"Yes, just now; but lor', what's sixteen shilling a week and find yerself, when there's eleven childun, which, with me and the father, make thirteen in family?

"But the shop?"

"Yes, the shop. Much good that do me! I took in just eighteen pence yesterday and sixpence to-day."

"Well, but the day is not finished yet. I have come to deal with you, for one. I want a decent linsey woolsey gown, and a plain plaid shawl and a cheap straw bonnet for myself, and a nankeen or pique cloak and a little straw cap for the babe," said Madge, confidently.

"Don't say so! What's up now, Magdalene Hurst? Has that rich uncle come home from Indy, or Australy, or Californy, or any o' them countries which grows rich uncles?" laughed the old-clothes woman.

"Nothing of the sort. I have been sent for to Scotland, where I was ill, you know. And a friend has advanced me the money to pay my expenses. And I must have decent clothes to travel in, you know," answered Madge, who had grown tired of repeating the

story of the beautiful bride who had been her benefactress.

"Then here's a black serge. Come, now, a nice dress for a widow woman like you; fit you like a glove, I know; and dirt cheap at six and ninepence."

"That will do. If it shouldn't fit me, I'll make it do so. Now for the shawl and bonnet," said Madge, as Mrs. Kempton took down the dress and laid it on the counter.

"Here's a good black woolen shawl as will match the dress beautiful; indeed, it were bought with the dress," said Mrs. Kempton, taking down a folded parcel from a shelf. "Cheap at four and sixpence."

"Well, now the bonnet."

"Here it is; a good black leghorn, not much worn, dirt cheap at one and threepence."

"Hem—let's see," said Madge, counting rapidly upon her fingers—"four and nine for the dress, and one and trippings for the bonnet, makes eight shillings, and four and six for the shawl, makes twelve shilling sixpence, and seven and six for the cloak and hood makes—yes, exactly one pound. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do with you, Mrs. Kempton; I'll give you ten shilling for the whole lot."

"Whew! I don't think as how you will, Mrs. Hurst," said the old-clothes woman.

There ensued a great deal of bargaining, which was ended at last by the parties compromising on fifteen shillings as the price of the lot of goods.

"Drop in and take a cup of tea with mother and me, in 'bout half an hour," said Madge, magnificently, as she put her purchases in the big basket on the top of her redeemed pans and kettles.

As the basket was now full, it was necessary to take it upstairs and empty it before she could go out and purchase the materials for her evening feast.

On reaching the upper floor and the door of her own room, she just slipped the basket inside, saying:

"Fill the kettle, mother, and put it on, and I'll be back again by the time the water is boiled.

Then around to old Mrs. Flowers sped Madge, to carry her invitation to her "tea party."

The next door Madge rapped at was that of the front room opposite the old couple's apartment, and on the same side of the hall with her own. It was tenanted by the poor young seamstress and her invalid sister.

To the sweetly spoken "come in," Madge entered a room different in many respects from the other three on that floor.

It was not almost bare, like her own room, or crowded with furniture, like the other two. It was neatly, thought scantily, furnished. And every part of the room, and every article in it, was scrupulously clean.

On a clean, plain bed, covered with a patchwork quilt, lay a deathly-pale girl.

At the fire, with a bright tin saucepan in her hand, stood another girl, scarcely less delicate looking than the invalid on the bed. This girl was quite pretty, and might have been called beautiful had it not been for the pallor of her complexion and the thinness of her cheeks. She had soft, bright, brown hair, parted over a full, broad, intellectual-looking forehead, and wound in a rich roll at the back of her head. She had large, soft gray eyes, fringed with thick, black lashes, and arched with fine black brows. She had a small, straight nose, and small, full lips, expressive of much sweetness of temper.

"Well, Rachel, and how is Matty this evening?" commenced Madge.

"Very well, Mrs. Hurst. Will you sit down?"

"No, thanky. I only came to ask you to drop in this evening. Me and mother are having of a little tea party."

Rachel Wood lifted her pretty eyebrows in natural surprise, on hearing that the two women who had been starving for the last few weeks were giving a tea party this evening.

"Will you come?" inquired Madge.

"No, thank you kindly, Mrs. Hurst. You know I never leave poor Matty except when I'm compelled to do so," said Rachel Wood, as she poured the oatmeal

gruel she had been making from the saucepan into a little white bowl.

"But it is only for to-night, and only into the next room, and you can slip in here every ten minutes, if you like, to see how Matty is getting on. And besides, I'm going to Scotland to-morrow morning, and it is a sort o' leave-taking, you know," urged Madge.

"Ay? Have you got your place on the boat back again?" inquired Rachel.

"Maybe so," answered Madge, evasively, for she did not wish to enter into explanations.

"I'm right glad to hear it," said Rachel, as she set the bowl of gruel on a small, red tray, and gave it to her sister.

"Thanky. But will you come to tea?"

"No; I would rather not leave, Matty," said Rachel.

"Oh, do go, Ray," spoke the invalid from the bed; "do go, Ray, and have a good time. Never mind me. I shall do very well. After I have eaten my gruel, I shall turn over and go to sleep. And when you come back again, you can tell me all about it, you know. It will amuse me."

Still Rachel hesitated; but she yielded at length, so far as to say that she would "drop in" to Mrs. Hurst's room for a few minutes after her poor sister had fallen asleep.

With this understanding Madge took leave of the sick girl, and left the room.

And in a very few moments afterward Matty Wood complained of drowsiness, and turned her face to the wall and fell asleep, or feigned to do so.

After watching her sister suspiciously for a little while, Rachel arose and brushed her soft brown hair, took off her white apron, smoothed down the folds of her neat brown calico dress, put on a clean collar, and then, after taking another look at her sleeping sister, went in to the "tea party."

There have been many costly and fashionable entertainments, at which there was much less of enjoyment than at this very humble little feast in the poor tenement-house.

Rachel Wood found all the invited guests assembled.

Old Mrs. Flowers and old Mrs. Hurst sat together on the side of the bed, each with a cup of tea well-flavored with rum in her hand. Mrs. Juniper and Mrs. Kempton sat, the one on the old hair trunk and the other on the rickety chair, each sipping her tea, not flavored with anything more objectionable than doubtful milk and sugar.

Madge Hurst stood at the fire with a frying-pan in her hand, frying rashers of bacon, whose aroma filled the air.

Rachel Wood, who seldom showed herself among her fellow-lodgers, was greeted noisily.

Each woman, young or old, got up and offered her own seat to the newcomer.

And Rachel smiled on all, and thanked each, but took none of the proffered seats, until Madge Hurst called out:

"There's room on the edge of the bed, Rachel. Sit down there by mother till I bring you a cup o' tea."

Rachel did as she was directed, and Madge soon supplied her with tea, toast and bacon.

The party kept up merrily until quite a late hour, when it broke up, and each woman went to her own room—Rachel Wood to make her wakeful sister laugh at the comic descriptions she gave of the tea party; old Mrs. Flowers to have a basin of porridge ready for her girls when they should come in, and Mrs. Juniper to wait up for her husband to give him his supper.

Very early next morning Madge was astir. And while old Ruth Drug was sleeping off the effects of her last night's feast, Madge prepared breakfast and ate it, and dressed her child and herself for the journey.

And still the old woman slept on, and still Madge forbore to wake her.

But it was now seven o'clock, and she had to go, in order to catch the steamer before it should leave the wharf. So she took a look at her mother, kissed her where she lay, and then, with her child in her arms, left the room and closed the door behind her.

She walked rapidly through a labyrinth of lanes,

alleys and by streets that lay between her dwelling and the riverside, and then kept along the docks until she came to the place where the *Shaft* was swiftly getting up her steam.

"There, I hadn't a minute more to lose," said the young woman, as she went to the side of the steamer and crossed the gangplank leading to its deck.

Madge was fortunate. While she was standing on the deck waiting for some one whom she had known on the boat to pass by her way, the captain himself came along and saw her, and hailed her good-humoredly.

"Eh, Madge, woman, is that you? You're unco hard to kill! Aweel! and hae ye come back to get your old place on the boat?"

"If you please, captain, I am going up to that town where I was so long ill, but I would like very much to have my old place as stewardess again. I could leave the child with my mother."

"Ay, woman, and I mysel' should like vera weel to hae such a skillfu' hand about the cabin; but this will be my last trip. The old *Shaft* is going to be laid up for repairs, and mysel' for the same purpose, I'm thinking."

"You don't look like laying up, sir, if you'll pardon me the liberty of saying so. You look well, sir."

"Ay, lass, for threescore and ten. Aweel, then. There, gang your ways intil your old quarters, and ye shall no be at any costs for your trip," said the captain, heartily, as he passed her on his errand.

"Thanky, most kindly, sir; and may the Lord——"

"There! that will do. Go make yourselves comfortable," said the captain, as he hurried off.

So privileged, Madge found her way to the little room she had used while stewardess of the boat. And there she sat down on the side of her berth, to nurse her child and put him to sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

STILL UNREVEALED.

The two days' voyage passed without other incident to Madge Hurst than the spasmodic courtship of her friend Tony Brice.

On the evening of the second day the steamer dropped anchor in the little bay of Killford.

Madge, with the child in her arms, left the boat. As soon as she went on shore she turned her steps to the suburbs of the town, where the hut of the old dame, Jean Gaunt, was standing.

The way was long, and the night grew dark before she came in sight of the hut, to which she was then only guided by the glow of the firelight seen through its little windows.

She knocked, but, receiving no answer, opened the door and entered the hut.

All was dark within, except for the dim red glow of the smoldering peat fire, that scarcely served to show the outlines of the wretched bed in the distant corner.

Madge went to the fireplace, and, feeling around, found the stump of an old iron poker, with which she stirred the smoldering peat into a blaze that lit up the small room. Then, from a pile of the same fuel that lay close by the chimney corner, she threw on a fresh supply to feed the fire.

At the same moment the child, whom she held in one arm all this while, began to crow and laugh with delight at the sudden blaze.

The light and the laughter together aroused the old woman, who seemed to have been sleeping soundly on the corner bed. Raising herself upon her elbow, and staring wildly at the woman and child, she inquired, in a very weak and cracked voice:

"Wha's you?"

"It is I, Magdalene Hurst, Mrs. Gaunt. You said you wanted to see me, and I have come all the way

from London to see you," said Madge, going to the side of the bed.

"Ay, ay, lass, I behooved to see ye before I deed."

"I hope you are not sick, Mrs. Gaunt," said Madge, seating herself on the side of the bed.

"I'm na sick, or onywise ailing of ony thing waur than auld age, whilk ye ken is often a fatal disorder, Madge woman."

"You said, Mrs. Gaunt, that you had something to tell me. Do you wish to tell me now, or shall I come some other time?" inquired Madge.

"Some ither time? How lang do ye think I hae got to live, lass? Na, na, ye maun hear the truth noo. And now, Madge, woman, harken till me. That bonny bairn in your arms is nane o' your'n."

"Bosh, dame! Did you bring me all the way from London to tell me such rubbish as this?" demanded Madge Hurst, half angrily.

"It's nae rubbish. I did na help that bairn intil the warld," insisted Jean Gaunt.

"Fiddle-de-dee! Then I reckon you never nursed me in my confinement?"

"Ou, ay, I did; and I delivered you of a puir wee bairn, that deed the day it was born, the while ye were in a dead sleep, sae ye did na ken onything about the change o' the bairns."

"The change of the babies!" exclaimed Madge, now fairly aroused.

"Ay, just. I'm no wandering, as ye think, lass."

Surprise, pain, perplexity, all possessed the mind of Madge at once. "What do you mean? This is not my child? This not mine?" she cried, gazing down into the face of the delicate babe, and being struck all at once by its utter dissimilarity to herself, her late husband and all their dark race. "Not mine! In the name of goodness, then, whose is it?" she gasped, with a pang at her heart.

"I dinna ken just that preceesely. It will be a leddy, noo, in Stirling or in Callendor, I dinna mind whilk. But she's dead, too."

"Who is dead?" sharply demanded Madge.

"The mither of that bairn, whilk will be a luve child, I tak it."

"Who is she? what is her name? Who is the mother of this child that has been thrown upon me?" cried Madge, with increasing excitement.

"Ou, dinna mak sic a noise! I dinna ken, I telled ye! Ou, I'm vera bad in my chest! Raise me up!" gasped the dying woman, breathing very hard.

"Tell me, then," said Madge, as she lifted her—"tell me how you dared to deceive me so."

"Ay, ay—to keep ye fra breaking yer heart for yer deed bairn. Your bairn was deed, and it wanted a mither. And sae—and—sae—— Ou! lay me doon. I canna fetch my breath," gasped the dying sinner, changing so suddenly that Madge dropped her form in a fright and a hurry, and ran to get the cordial, which she poured into a spoon and put to the patient's lips.

But the rattle in her throat prevented her from swallowing, and her eyes were fixed.

Overcome by the awful presence of death, Madge dropped on her knees, and, with the long forgotten instinct of reverence, repeated aloud the only prayer she knew.

Madge stayed in the village for a few days, in order to ascertain whether the mystery surrounding the unknown child might be cleared up.

But all that she learned was, firstly, that the babe was not hers; second, that it was the child of a lady of Stirling or of Callendor, who had died in giving it birth; and all that she had in the way of a clew was a little white flannel sack that she had found in the dead woman's trunk—a sack lined with white silk and embroidered with white floss, and a tiny white sock of Shetland wool, with a white silk cord and tassel.

With this much in the way of information and clew, she left old Jean Gaunt to be buried by the parish, and she went on board the *Shaft* to return to London.

While they were steaming out to sea, Madge sat on the deck, with the child on her lap.

She was very miserable. She was naturally grieved and angry at the cruel deception and heavy burden that

had been put upon her. She had loved and nursed this poor child for more than six months; now she sometimes felt as if she hated it. She was at cross-purposes with herself; often, in a paroxysm of indignation, she felt impelled to pitch the poor child overboard, even if she had followed him the next moment; and often again, in a great passion of pity, she would clasp the forlorn child to her bosom and cover him with caresses.

Poor storm-beaten soul! She had neither a particle of self-knowledge nor of self-control.

While she sat on the deck, with all this commotion within her seeming quiet bosom, Tony Brice found a brief opportunity to come and speak to her.

"Well, lass!" he said, looking at her wistfully, "what was the secret the dame had to tell you? Is it anything you can tell again? My eyes! now I can see you good, I'm blowed if you don't look as black and glum as if you had had a murder confessed to you. Was it a murder, lass?"

"It might just as well have been a murder," said Madge, savagely.

And then she told him of the strange communication made to her by old Jean Gaunt.

"Never mind, old gall, you take care of the little lad, and I'll help you to do it," said Tony Brice, as he left the side of the woman and went about his business.

In due time the steamer reached London.

It was late in the evening when she ran in alongside of her wharf.

Tony Brice, in hurrying past Madge, expressed a regret that his duties would not allow him to see her safe home and carry the baby for her; but he promised to come to her as soon as he should be able to get off.

Madge only laughed at him, and shouldered the baby on one side and the bundle on the other, and set off for Junk lane.

Madge found the old rookery very much as she had left it—the doorsteps occupied by the same group of ragged and dirty children, the passage and stairs filthy thoroughfares for men, women, boys and girls, themselves almost as filthy.

Old Ruth Drug sat in her room, smoking and grumbling over a handful of coals in the grate, where she was boiling a saucepan full of water.

"Well, my gall, and so you're home at last! And now tell me what that ere secret as the old Scotch 'oman had to tell you," she growled.

"Let me take off my bonnet and rest first, mother," said Madge, as she sat down on the side of the bed.

After a few moments she told her mother the oft-repeated story first told her by old Jean Gaunt.

Ruth Drug listened in silence, and puffed away at her pipe until the story was all told and the pipe was smoked out. Then, singularly enough, she gave the same advice that had been given by Tony Brice.

"Take care on him, Madge. That babby would a been worth stealing if he hadn't been put upon you. Yes, he'd a been worth stealing; he's sich a first-rate babby to beg with. So he's wallable on that account, Madge, let alone some o' these days his fine friends coming to claim him, and to pay you handsome for taking care on him."

CHAPTER XV.

DUKE OF CHEVIOT.

The "happy pair," a really very "happy pair," were enjoying themselves so much that, at the end of the fourth week of their stay at Penzance, neither Eglantine nor her husband felt any desire to leave, and so they determined to duplicate their honeymoon by staying four weeks longer.

They had just returned from a trip to Land's End, and Eglantine had run upstairs to lay off her hat and wrappings, and William Douglas was about to follow her, when their landlady, who had opened the door to admit them, made him a sign to remain behind.

"Well, what is it, Mrs. Ashe?" inquired Mr. Douglas.

The landlady waited till she heard Eglantine enter

the room above and close the door, and then she came near and whispered:

"A telegram, sir. I thought, as it might, perhaps, bring bad news, you would prefer to open it alone, not to alarm the lady."

"Certainly; thanks for your precaution, Mrs. Ashe," replied Mr. Douglas, as he took the telegram, and, with some trepidation, opened and read:

TROSACK CASTLE, September 9.

The Duke of Cheviot died suddenly this morning.

SHETLAND.

It was very unpleasant to have their happy honeymoon broken up by a death and a funeral, even though it had been the death and funeral of a mere acquaintance. And they both loved the aged Duke of Cheviot, whom, they said, often reminded them of some grand old Douglas of history.

So William Douglas broke the news to his wife as gently as if he had been telling her of the death of a parent. And Eglantine sat down and wept.

"We have been so happy, so perfectly happy, for the last six weeks, and now comes this to make us sorrowful," she said.

"No one can be happy for any length of time in this world, you know, darling. And there are a great many things a great deal worse than the death of the aged," said William Douglas.

"And now, of course, we must go back directly."

"Yes, of course, dear."

Eglantine rang for old Elspeth, whom she still retained as her attendant, in preference to any younger and more pretentious lady's maid.

And they were all soon in all the bustle of preparation.

They left Penzance that same evening.

At the end of the second day's journey they reached Trosach Castle.

"I hope the family are all well in this trying time, Burnside," said Mr. Douglas to the solemn hall porter who admitted them.

"Yes, your grace," answered the man, with a bow.

William Douglas started slightly and looked at the speaker, and then recollected himself.

To be sure. Six weeks since he had left Trosach Castle as plain Mr. William Douglas. Now, by the death of his greatuncle, he returned to Trosach Castle as the Duke of Cheviot, Earl of Wellrose, viscount this, that and the other, and baron something else. There were at least half a dozen other titles attached to the dukedom of Cheviot.

"Will your grace take some refreshment?" inquired the butler, who came out of the dining-room.

"When will dinner be ready?" inquired the new duke.

"At eight, your grace," said the butler.

"Then we will take nothing till dinner; eh, Eglantine?"

"Nothing," assented the new duchess.

The groom of the chambers now advanced, and inquired if he might have the honor of showing their graces to their rooms.

The duke, as we must henceforth call him, drew Eglantine's arm within his own, and followed their conductor upstairs.

They were shown into the very same suite of apartments once occupied by Eglantine, and in which she had suffered such anguish of mind. The place had been "swept and garnished" for their reception now, and an adjoining chamber fitted up as a dressing-room for the young duke, into which he passed.

Old Elspeth soon entered, with her lady's dressing-bag in her hands.

And Eglantine, after washing the dust from her face and hands, and submitting her hair to old Elspeth's hands to be combed and arranged, found a suitable dress in her wardrobe that had been left behind here, and proceeded to make her toilet for dinner.

She had not quite finished it when there came a knock at the door, followed by the entrance of Gillispie, Lady Shetland's maid.

"Well, my good Gillispie, how do you do? and—— What do you want?" asked Eglantine, good-humoredly.

"Please, your grace, my lady directed me to ask if you would be so good as to look in at her ladyship's boudoir before going down," said the woman.

"Tell my aunt I will be with her in a moment," said Eglantine, rising from her dressing chair, and taking a last survey of herself in the mirror before leaving the room.

She passed out of her room and across the hall to the opposite wing of the house, in which her aunt's apartments were situated.

Lady Shetland was sitting alone. She was also very plainly dressed, in a brown moire antique, with a little lace collar, fastened with a pearl brooch at her neck, and a little pair of lace cuffs at her wrists. She arose and kissed Eglantine, and said:

"I am very glad to see you, my love. You will forgive my not coming to you, but in truth I have not been well for some days, and this sad event was very sudden and shocking."

"Very," echoed Eglantine, with a shudder, as she sat down on a cushion at her aunt's feet.

"He went to bed Monday night as well as ever I saw him. He rang the bell for his valet at eight on Tuesday morning. It was some two hours earlier than the duke's usual time of rising, and his servant, not expecting such a summons, was in bed, as it seems. He arose and dressed himself quickly, however, fearing that something might be wrong. And he hastened to his master's room, to find him—quite dead."

"How dreadful" muttered Eglantine, covering her eyes.

"Very dreadful! He must have died immediately after ringing his bell, for the man Richardson declares that the bell was rung at eight, and that he himself was at the duke's bedside ten minutes after. He gave the alarm immediately, and some time before nine o'clock the marquis, myself and Lady Margaret, with Dr. McGill and others, were assembled around his bed. He was quite dead. McGill said that he must have been dead full three-quarters of an hour."

"And dear Lady Margaret? How does she bear it?" inquired Eglantine.

"I can scarcely tell you? There were no demonstrations from her. She stood by the bedside and gazed upon the body with a look of unutterable grief, or turned her eyes in an agony of anxiety from one face to another, as if searching for some ground of hope from their expression. But when she heard the doctor's final sentence, 'Dead, quite dead,' she fainted, and was borne in a state of unconsciousness to her own room. She has not left it since."

"Ah, poor child! I must go in and see her. She will let me in, don't you think?"

"I do not know. She receives me, of course, when I go to see her; but I think she only does so in courtesy. I do not think she likes my visits. Though I am bound in duty to make them sometimes, I restrict myself to one short call each morning."

"I will send Elspeth to ask if I may go and see her this evening."

"Yes, I wish you would. Perhaps you may be able to rouse her from her deep depression, though it is scarcely probable that she will rally her spirits until after the funeral."

"When is the funeral to be?"

"On Tuesday. He lays in the long drawing-room. He looks very well, like some noble effigy. Would you like to see him, Eglantine?"

"Yes, aunt, if you please," answered the young duchess; then, suddenly recollecting herself, she exclaimed:

"Oh, no! I would rather not, please! The last time I saw him he was alive, and he looked so finely then that I would rather not have his living image replaced by his dead one."

And then, as if to change the conversation from a subject too gloomy for her spirits, she inquired:

"Who are staying in the house, dear aunt?"

"No one but the home circle and Lady Margaret, my love. The Chimbozas went two weeks ago. The duke

and Lady Margaret stayed on, at our repeated invitation. The air here seemed to do him so much good."

"Yes; so Margaret wrote me. Strange that he should have died after all!"

"Yes; it is often so with the aged, however. It was a stroke of apoplexy, my love."

"Yes, aunt, I supposed so."

"Well, dear, as I said, the duke and Margaret stayed on at our invitation. And Captain Harry lingered, I fancy, because he could not tear himself away from Margaret."

"Ah, that suit prospers, then?"

"I think so."

"Where is Captain Harry now?"

"At the Seton Arms. He lingered there until the sudden death of the duke and the self-seclusions of Margaret, and then he went away, leaving a letter of adieu to us all. He is staying at the Seton Arms for the funeral, of course. There is the dinner-bell, my love. Come."

The two ladies arose and left the room together. In the hall they met the young duke, who was gravely welcomed by Lady Shetland. In the second drawing-room below they were joined by the marquis, who cordially greeted his niece and nephew, and offered his arm to the former, leaving Lady Shetland to be taken in by the latter.

A rather gloomy dinner this was to those who remembered what lay in the long drawing-room across the hall.

The marquis did his best to enliven the scene.

"We have, after all, something fairer than funerals to tell you of, my dear Eglantine," he began. "There are two prospective weddings, which, however, must of course, be delayed for a while, under the present circumstances. But 'time and the hour wear away the weariest day.'"

"Two weddings, did you say?" inquired Eglantine, at once interested.

"Two prospective weddings, my love. And as none of the parties are present, I think we may speak to the

point. Lady Margaret Douglas and Captain Francis Harry are engaged. Almost the last act of the duke's life was to sanction the engagement."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Eglantine.

"And you will be even better pleased to hear that Ornoch and Miss Chimboza are progressing favorably in the same direction. And if they are not now positively engaged, they must be very nearly so. He followed her to Torquay, where the family have gone for a few weeks, having found the Highlands in September too bracing for their Indian constitutions. Humph! I suppose it is all settled by this time."

"Ah! I hope it is!" fervently exclaimed Eglantine.

"Hardly so soon, I should judge," coldly suggested Lady Shetland.

The party of four did not linger long over the dinner-table. Lady Sheland and Eglantine withdrew, leaving the two gentlemen over their wine, and went to the little drawing-room, where Eglantine said:

"Aunt, if you will please excuse me, I will go upstairs now, and se if I can get admission to poor Margaret."

"Certainly, my dear; go, and give my best love to the poor girl."

So permitted, Eglantine went upstairs to her own room, where Elspeth was engaged in unpacking her boxes, which had just arrived.

"Elspeth, dear, I want you to go to Lady Margaret Douglas' room, and give her my love, and ask her if I may come and see her."

Elspeth let down the lid of the trunk she was unpacking, and got up and went away upon her errand.

Eglantine, feeling very tired, threw herself into a resting-cair to await the return of her messenger.

Presently Elspeth came back, and said:

"If you please, me leddy—I mean, yer grace, but I canna just mind a' the time—Leddy Margaret sends her love, and will be unco glad to see you, and——"

Eglantine waited not an instant to hear one word more, but sprang up and hurried out of the room and down the whole length of the hall to the door of Lady

Margaret's boudoir. She rapped softly, and was told by Margaret to come in.

She entered, and found her friend alone and lying one a lounge, pale, tearful, wasted with grief.

Eglantine went and knelt down beside her and kissed her, almost ready to weep for company.

"Oh, my poor darling," she murmured, softly; "why do you grieve so bitterly? Why, your poor, sweet face is as white as your gown! Don't grieve so, love!"

"Oh, Eglantine!" cried the bereaved daughter, with a great burst of tears and sobs. "We two lived alone together so many, many years. We two were all the world to one another all that time. Poor Wellrose lived at his club mostly, and we two were always alone together. And now he is gone, and I am left! And though Heaven has sent new friends and better days, I cannot reconcile myself to his loss! Oh, Eglantine! after we had suffered so many hardships and privations together, I did so much want him to live many years, to enjoy with me these better and happier days!"

"My darling Margaret, I know how sad it is for you to lose the sight of his kind old face; but as for him, dear, Margaret, don't your faith teach you that even now he is enjoying better and happier days in Heaven than the best and happiest this earth could give him?"

"I know, I know; but I must weep, all the same!"

Then Eglantine, finding that she could in no way comfort her friend, fairly broke down and wept for sympathy. And they mingled their tears together until there came a rap at the door, followed by the entrance of a housemaid, bearing a tray with tea and toast for Lady Margaret, and bringing a message from Lady Shetland to the young duchess, to the effect that her ladyship waited for her grace in the drawing-room.

Eglantine, with her own loving hands, helped to arrange Margaret's repast upon a little stand beside her lounge, and after that still lingered until she saw her sipping some tea, before she obeyed the summons of Lady Shetland and went below.

Soon after tea, Eglantine, feeling very tired from her

long journey, excused herself and retired to her chamber.

The next day, and every intervening day until that of the funeral, Eglantine spent several hours with Lady Margaret Douglas. And though she caused her to weep, she felt that she did her good.

On Tuesday, the eighth day since the Duke of Cheviot's death, his funeral obsequies were performed.

It was a magnificent and solemn pageant. All the nobility and gentry of the country side attended in person or sent their carriages, though these latter were of little use, because the body of the duke was to be laid for the present in the vault of the ancient chapel of Trosach Castle. Later on, it was destined to be removed to the old family vault at Cheviot Castle.

But Cheviot Castle was just now in the hands of strangers, who, though their right of occupancy expired with the death of the Duke of Cheviot, who had signed away his life interest in the same, could not in common courtesy be required to vacate the premises at a moment's warning. Thus the corpse of the Duke of Cheviot became a temporary tenant of the vault under Trosach Chapel.

After the funeral, the young Duke and Duchess of Cheviot took their orphaned relative, the youthful Lady Margaret Douglas, to their hearts and homes.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE INFANT EARL.

The weeks passed on. Early in June the Queen held a drawing-room. And the young Duchess of Cheviot was presented, on her marriage, by the Marchioness of Shetland. The youth, beauty and grace of this new *débutante* into court circles made the sensation of the day. Her presentation was a perfect success. After this triumph, she might have become the reigning belle and the queen of fashion for the short remainder of the

season, but for one circumstance. It became necessary that the young Duke and Duchess of Cheviot should leave London for Cheviot Castle, Invernesshire, in anticipation of an important family event.

An heir was expected, and it was deemed fit and proper that the little stranger should first see the light in the old ancestral halls of its race. So to Cheviot Castle, in the warm month of July, they went.

On the west coast of Invernesshire, there is a small bay making up from the Atlantic. It runs about a mile inland, and is surrounded by high mountainous cliffs. Within the embrace of this bay, and almost as large as the bay, stands a high, rocky island, surrounded on three sides by a deep, narrow arm of the sea, and bounded on the fourth by the open sea itself. On this isolated island stands the ancient feudal hold or fortress known as Cheviot Castle; memorable for its great antiquity, its immense strength, and its historical fame and family associations. It was not a pleasant place to live in. All the fine London flunkies carried thither in the train of the duke and duchess, voted it "an 'orrid hold 'ole," and existence there "a hawful bore." Only old Elspeth thought it was "an unco grand auld place."

Whoever was right, at all events there, on the thirtieth day of October, to the young duke and duchess of Cheviot was born a son, who, in the next year's issue of Burke's Peerage, was duly recorded as:

William-Alexander-Cromarte-Seton-Douglas, Earl of Wellrose.

They continued to reside at Cheviot Castle until the first of December, when they went south, and took possession of their handsome seaside residence on Brunswick Terrace, Brighton, which, except Torquay, is the brightest, mildest and pleasantest winter quarters in all England.

In February they went up to London and opened their magnificent town house in Piccadilly.

There Lady Margaret Douglas, who had been spending several months on the Continent with the Marchioness of Shetland as her guest, came home to them.

Early as it now was in the London season, all their friends were already in town. The Marquis and Marchioness of Shetland were at the house in Park Lane.

The Earl and Countess Dowager of Ornoch were at Westbourne Terrace.

The Chimbozas were in South Audley street.

And Captain Francis Harry was on duty at St. James'.

And on the fourteenth of this month there was another pageant at St. George's Church, Hanover Square, upon which occasion the rights of holy baptism were administered to the infant Earl of Wellrose, when a bishop, assisted by two priests, officiated; and two royal dukes stood as godfathers, and a princess of the blood as godmother.

As the christening party came out of the church to enter their carriages, they were stared at by the usual crowd of wretched idlers, who, amid all their own squalor and misery, seemed to delight in a spectacle of pomp and splendor, as in some free theatrical exhibition.

Among this crowd stood one who took no pleasure in this scene—a tall, dark woman, haggard in features and tattered in dress. She was staring, with gleaming eyes and gathering brows, upon the pageantry before her.

She held by the hand a fair, wan child of about two years of age. His delicate, thinly-clad form was shivering with cold and famine, and his fine, light hair was blown about by the wind, but his clear blue eyes were beaming in sympathy with the gay and happy party he saw before him. Though from his tender age and physical weakness he was scarcely able to keep his feet, he danced with delight and clapped his little hands and shouted.

And when the beautiful young mother came out of the church, veiled and holding her head down to protect her face from the high winds, leaning on the arm of her handsome husband, and followed by the nurse, bearing the child, the poor little outcast shouted again

with delight, and pulled the woman's skirts, and cried, joyfully:

"Oh, mammy; 'ook! ook! hee! hee! booful lady; booful baby!"

"Be quiet, Benny!" scowled and growled the woman. "I hate 'em! I hate 'em all! They are devils! proud, scornful, cruel, heartless devils! One such as them had a child she didn't want to own, and she heaved it to the dogs to perish. I don't know who she was, but the child she heaved to the dogs was you, Benny, and the dog that picked you up was me. I wish I could find her! I wish I could kill her! I wish I could kill 'em all, and send 'em to burning——"

"Come! you're drunk! Move on there!" said a policeman, interrupting Madge's growling monologue, by taking her by the shoulder and turning her about.

And so Madge Hurst, for the woman was no other, "moved on" with the child in her hand, never guessing that she had ever met that elegantly-dressed, veiled lady before.

And the beautiful young Duchess of Cheviot entered her carriage without ever suspecting that she had passed so near the woman and child for whom she had looked and inquired so long and so vainly.

And the elder brother, the innocent little outcast, was dragged off by a desperate and drunken woman to his squalid garret in the London rookery, to suffer and pine in want and sin.

And the younger brother, the infant earl, was borne away by his happy mother to his palace home, to live and smile in the lap of luxury and the sunlight of love.

On the seventh of May there was a splendid pageant at St. Peter's Church, Eaton Square; a double wedding in high life, in which Alexander, Earl of Ornoch, was united in marriage to Hinda, only daughter and heiress of General Chimboza, late of the Honorable East India Company's Service, and Captain Francis Harry, of the Royal Guards, to the Lady Margaret Douglas, sole surviving daughter of the late Duke of Cheviot.

The church was crowded with the friends of the two

young bridal pairs. And the space in front of the church was crowded with carriages.

At the close of the ceremonies the whole party adjourned to the house of General and Mrs. Chimboza, where a sumptuous and elegant wedding-breakfast awaited them.

Here speeches were made and toasts were drank, and the festivity kept up for nearly three hours, at the end of which the brides changed their bridal dresses for traveling suits, and started with their bridegrooms for their wedding tours.

The young Earl and Countess of Ornoch went to the Continent.

Captain and Lady Margaret Harry went no further off than the Westmoreland Lakes.

There was fine weather in London now, in this "merry month of May." And the young Duchess of Cheviot drove out daily with her boy and his nurse.

Though a fine, healthy child in body, he was very delicate and sensitive in mind. He could scarcely endure to see pain, yet his mother taught him to look upon it, to pity it and to relieve it. And whenever, in the course of their daily drives, the boy would shrink and hide his head from the sight of some tattered, famished, diseased beggar, his mother would gently turn him around, and direct his attention to the object of misery, and murmur, in tones of tenderest compassion:

"Look, Willie—poor man! poor, poor man. Willie! Give him something, Willie!" And then she would slip a coin into the boy's hand, and make him the medium of her charities.

And so the boy grew in grace and favor, and in all gentle humanities and Christian affections.

And meanwhile his little elder brother was not only shut out from all the comforts and necessaries of life, but from all domestic love, and all good and holy influences.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LITTLE OUTCAST.

"Well, then, keep out of my way, you little devil! Ain't it enough to be burdened with one's own business without being bothered along o' other people's castaway brats? Hold yer noise now, before I give yer something to howl for!"

Madge Hurst, to use her own expression, was "up to her eyes in work," though this was Sunday morning. She had been scouring pots and pans and washing windows, and then she was down on her knees scrubbing the floor, when little Benny, in his childish efforts to help her, got into her way, and got himself knocked down and hurt; for he was a very weak little fellow, and easily upset, also very sensitive and easily affected.

There was no mother to pick him up and soothe his pain with tender caresses; there was only Madge to seize and shake him and scream at him, until his little heart trembled with grief and terror.

For the slight mistake of trying with his tiny hands to help her she reproached him as fiercely as if, instead of being an innocent child, he had been a vicious man.

And the little one crept away to a corner, and sobbed as if his heart would break.

The reason for all this cleaning up, this spring Sunday morning, was that Madge and Tony Brice were going to be married this day, and the wedding-feast was to be held in Madge's room this night.

Madge worked with a will, and soon completed her task, and then she washed and dressed herself in her best holiday clothes—a thin and tarnished yellow silk gown, bought second-hand from Mrs. Kempton's shop for five shillings, and a square, flowered shawl, and a leghorn bonnet, trimmed with green ribbon, from the same repository of cast-off finery. And Madge surveyed herself in the cracked and mildewed oval mirror that hung over her chest of drawers between the two back windows, and was well satisfied. And, in fact,

her appearance was rather picturesque than otherwise; for no absurdity of costume could possibly detract from the effect of the savage creature's rough, dark, wild beauty.

So pleased with herself was this "bride-elect," that she went to the corner cupboard, where the viands for the wedding-feast was stored, and took a piece of gingerbread and carried it to the sobbing child in the corner and gave it to him, saying:

"There, take that and stop crying, you little brat!"

"Love Benny, mammy! Oh, pease love Benny!" sobbed the child, his desolate little heart longing for an embrace.

"Oh, there! now stow all! Take your cake, and let your vittles stop your mouth," said Madge, turning away to look up her blue cotton gloves.

"Why, w'at's the matter wi' my little man?" inquired the rough voice of an individual who had just entered the room.

It was Tony Brice, dressed very smartly in his holiday clothes, with his shock of red hair plastered down with grease, that had turned it to a reddish brown, and made it a funny contrast to his full and fiery beard.

"What's the matter, old fellow?" he again asked the child.

"Mammy won't tiss me! mammy won't love me!" sobbed Benny.

"She won't, eh? Then swear at her, my man! That is the way to treat the women when they won't mind you," said Tony Brice, with a loud laugh, as he lifted the child in his arms.

And Madge, instead of rebuking him, laughed loudly also.

"Come now, my jolly boy, let's see you shake your fist at her and swear so——" said the man; and then and there he taught the child a fearful oath, thinking it "good fun" to hear the innocent baby lips repeat the blasphemies put into its mouth.

And the child, ignorant of the meaning of the words, thinking it was all play, and wishing to please "mam-

my," whom he loved, and "daddy," as he already called his rough friend, tried his very best to learn the lesson and swear the oath. And when he had succeeded he clapped his hands for joy, and was rewarded with another piece of cake, while Madge and Tony laughed.

"And now, Madge, old gal, it's time to go to church, if we expect to be spliced to-day, because the sexton told me we must be there an hour before morning service, else it couldn't be done. It's most ten o'clock now, you know, and sarvice begins at eleven," urged Tony.

There was a sound of laughter in the passage outside. And Tony immediately exclaimed:

"There! there's my groomsman outside a talking to your bridesmaids! Let's go."

"Yes. Benny, you stay here and be quiet till we come back; do you hear?" said Madge.

"'Es, mammy! Benny be twiet!" said the child.

The engaged couple went outside, where they were joined by the Misses Flowers, in smart white mull muslin dresses and chip hats, all trimmed with pink ribbons, and also by John Hobbs, a fellow-fireman of Tony's.

The five went downstairs and went on in an orderly procession to the church.

It was a very ancient, very dilapidated and comparatively unfrequented church.

Around the door was a small crowd of idlers of the lowest order, drawn together by the rumor of a marriage in their own class. At the dor sat old Ruth Drug, Madge's mother, silently holding out her skinny hand to any chance passer-by and receiving now and then a penny. As the wedding-party reached the door she hobbled up on her feet and went in before them.

The pews nearest the chancel were filled up with the friends of the parties. There were old Daddy and Granny Flowers and old Ruth Drug in one pew, the Junipers in another, and the Kemptons in a third.

The curate on duty at the altar scarcely waited for the wedding-party to form in front of him before he opened the prayerbook and commenced the ceremony, which he hurried through with almost irreverent

haste. But he was scarcely to be blamed, for the bell was already ringing to call Christians to the morning service. At the close of the ceremony the denizens of Junk lane clustered about Madge and Tony with their good wishes, very much after the manner in which the lords and ladies of Belgravia crowd with congratulations around the noble bride and bridegroom married by a bishop at St. George's or St. Peter's.

And now the marriage was duly registered, and the newly-married man and woman, followed by all their party, went back to the old house in Junk lane.

That Sunday evening there was great feasting in Madge's room. All their fellow-lodgers in the house were invited, and also many of Tony Brice's water-side friends. There was only one absentee—Rachel Wood. And the room was very much crowded, and they ate and drank and sang and danced as though this were not the Sabbath evening. And the company might have been broken up by the police, had it not been in a back room on the third floor, where their noise could scarcely reach the street. That evening, too, all the rude guests were very kind to little Benny, according to their notions of kindness. They fed the child with unwholesome food, and plied him with as much sweetened rum and water as his tender brain could possibly bear, and then excited him to monkey antics.

"Where's Rachel Wood? Why an't she here?" inquired Mrs. Juniper, who had found her way to the side of Madge Brice.

"Oh, why, you know Rachel never leaves her sister no how, 'cept to fetch and carry work on week days; not as I think she'd go to a merry-making o' Sundays anywhays. But I'm glad you asked me, Missus Juniper, for that 'minds me I ought to take something to her and Matty," said Madge; and, pushing rudely past Fanny Flowers, who stood in her way, she called Tony Brice to her side, and she went to the cupboard and filled a plate with bread, cheese, cakes and apples, and filled a pitcher with spiced rum, and took up the plate herself, and ordered Tony to take up the pitcher and

follow her. Tony good-naturedly obeyed. And they went to Rachel Wood's room.

Tony passed in front of Madge, and opened the door and looked in.

And then a vision met his eyes that shocked and sobered him like a sudden douche of ice water.

On the white bed lay a form just as white, and very still. On one side knelt Rachel Wood, clasping her sister's cold hand, and gazing into her sister's glazed eyes as if hoping still for one more answering ray of light. On the other side knelt a lady, a stranger, with her hand clasping the pale hand of the dying girl, and with her head bowed over it in prayer.

"My Lord! Here's death here!" whispered Brice under his breath, as he softly closed the door. "Come away, Madge, girl! This is awful! We must send all them gals and fellows away."

Madge, struck dumb with awe, followed him back to their own room, where their very faces at once proclaimed that something serious had happened, or was about to happen.

Every one silently departed. Those who lodged in the house quietly retired to their rooms to wait silently there. And the others went away to their homes. And the old tenement was at once restored to the order and quiet befitting the solemn presence of death.

Let us enter the chamber of death for a moment and see what is going on there. Nothing is as yet changed since Tony Brice opened the door and looked in, just fifteen minutes ago. The white form still lies upon the white bed, and the two young women still kneel, the one upon the right, the other on the left side, and watch. At length there comes a deep sigh from the pale lips, and then all is still.

"That is the last," whispered the stranger lady, rising from her knees.

And then the sister's strained nerves gave way, and she fell to weeping bitterly by the side of her dead.

The lady stood in reverential silence. She did not attempt to comfort the mourner then. She could not bear to intrude on the first sacred moments of such a

grief. She turned silently to the dead. And she drew a handkerchief from her pocket and tenderly tied up the relaxed jaws, and closed the faded eyes. She was still standing with her thumbs softly pressed upon the shut lids, when Rachel Wood, who had cried herself into calmness, got up and came around to her, saying:

"Thanks, dear lady! Oh, thanks! Oh, how many thanks! What should I have done this awful night without you?"

"Hush, dear! not one word more. If I had not come, the good Lord would have sent you some one else. Come, now, dear, lock the door to keep people out, and you and I will quietly do all that is needful here."

"You, Mrs. Melliss? You? Why, you cannot! You have not been used to doing——" began Rachel; but she broke down and wept.

"Hush, dear. I have been used to doing more than you think. I will help you now. And to-night I will stay with you. And to-morrow I will order everything that is requisite to be done, so that you need not distress yourself about details," said the lady, with so much gentle firmness that Rachel Wood could only weep and obey.

The door was locked, for these two good women did not want any of those late rioters and profaners of the Sabbath to break in upon their holy calm with any officious proffers of service.

And who was Mrs. Melliss? Why, in the first place, as you might see at a glance, she was a very beautiful young woman, with the face of an angel—a small, perfectly formed graceful woman, with delicate features, a clear, pale complexion, deeply-fringed, soft-brown eyes, and crispy, curling bright, brown hair, and a very sweet mouth.

So much you might see for yourself. But if you had asked Rachel Wood who that lovely lady was, she could have told you that Mrs. Melliss was the loving and beloved young wife of an old Lombard street banker of three times her years; that her husband was a widower, who had disinherited his only daughter on account of the girl having eloped with a gay dragoon; and who

had subsequently married the youngest and brightest of a large family of girls, daughters of a needy, half-pay major, living at Kemptown, Brighton. And, further, that Mrs. Meliss had employed her, Rachel Wood, to do plain sewing, and had given her good wages for three years past.

Now, when their sacred task was completed, and a clean, fine white sheet, saved for this purpose, was carefully spread over the still white form, the two young women—the banker's wife and the poor seamstress—sat down to watch for day.

They sat a long time in silence, which Rachel Wood was the first to break.

"Mrs. Melliss, may I ask you a question?" she inquired.

"Certainly, dear."

"Have you heard any news of—of——"

"Of Melinda? No, dear, not since her unfortunate husband was discharged for intemperance," sighed the lady.

"And her father——"

"Is still unrelenting, dear."

Rachel sighed, and both relapsed into silence.

They watched together through the darkness of the night and into the dawning of the day. When the sun was up, Angela Melliss kissed the mourner, promised to return in the course of the day, and went away on foot, walking until she reached the Strand, where she called a cab to take her to Charles street.

She entered her husband's dressing-room just as he was brushing his hair.

A very handsome man was the banker; really sixty, but scarcely looking fifty years of age. He was tall and stout, with very dark hair, and beard and well-marked eyebrows, and, with glowing dark eyes, a rich, ruddy complexion, and an expression full of genial warmth.

As he turned and saw his wife, he dropped his hair-brushes and came and embraced her, asking:

"And where now has my little sister of the poor been?"

"Watching beside a dying bed, dearest. The sick girl I told you of is gone," she answered.

"Ah, poor thing! What can we do, Angel?"

"We can bury her. Her sister is not able to do it herself, and is not willing to let the parish do it."

"Very well, my darling. I will send Brown to give the necessary orders. But, as for you, you must not worry yourself another bit. You must go and lie down, and have some tea and toast brought to you."

She laughed and kissed him, and then went away to follow his advice.

And, a few days after this, the remains of poor Martha Wood were laid in the churchyard of that old church, in which Madge Hurst and Tony Brice had been so recently married.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FAIRY GRANDMOTHER.

Angela Melliss was very much younger than her husband, but it is a question whether more perfect love reigned in any household.

The banker made munificent settlements upon his young bride, yielding her a princely income that enabled her to indulge her benevolent sympathies to the utmost.

She was very seldom imposed upon even by the experienced London street beggars. Her purity of heart made her a discoverer of spirits. She could at once discriminate between a sufferer and an impostor, although she could not have told you the reason why.

But in all her almsgiving and personal serving she did not forget that "charity begins at home." She neglected no part of her duty to her husband, her stepson or her servants. She also did a great deal for "the girls," as she naively called six maiden half-sisters, the youngest of whom was ten years older than herself.

Surely never was a chaperone more successful in se-

curing establishments for her charge. Before the season was over she had married off both her maiden sisters advantageously—Arabella to a pursy broker of forty-five, and Belinda to a banker's clerk of forty-two.

The banker admitted that the "girls" were very handsome and showy women, but declared that he thought the broker and the clerk had married them partly for the sake of having Angela for a sister-in-law!

After the double marriage ceremony by which these two "girls" were made women, and at which all the other "girls" assisted as bridesmaids, Angela invited her next two in order to come and live with her; these were Carolina and Dorothea, aged respectively thirty-four and thirty-six.

And, to be brief, she married these two off in the course of the next year—Caroline to a physician with a good city practice, and Dorothea to a fox-hunting country squire.

And in the third year she disposed of Frances to an elderly barrister-at-law, and her favorite Agnes to a very handsome and very eloquent young minister of the Gospel.

If all these marriages, except the last, were rather mercenary on the part of the handsome "girls," Angela never suspected the fact. For she herself had married a wealthy man thirty years her senior without one selfish thought given to his wealth, and she loved him with a pure and fervent affection. How, then, could she suspect or even comprehend mercenary or even mixed motives in marriage? Her marriage was perfect in its love, trust and contentment. She loved and honored her husband far above all other earthly beings. And he loved and trusted her utterly.

She could do what she pleased with him, except in one particular—she could not induce him to forgive his refractory daughter Melinda, who had run away and got married to her good-for-nothing cousin, Charles Faulkner—Captain Faulkner, of the Hussars—who had gambled away his own fortune before he ran away with the banker's daughter, in the hope, said the banker, of gaining another fortune.

"If Melinda's mother had been living she would have gained Melinda's forgiveness. I am now in her mother's place, and will do a mother's part by her," said the banker's pretty little wife to herself.

And so, sincerely and earnestly, she tried to gain the daughter's pardon from the father, but tried in vain. In all other respects her indulgent husband was as wax in her hands; in that respect he was as adamant.

Once she thought she saw her way to win him to forgiveness. She happened to read in the "Births, Marriages and Deaths" column of the *Times* this paragraph:

"At Brighton, on the fifteenth instant, the wife of Captain Faulkner, of the —— Hussars, of a daughter."

She went with this to her husband, seated herself on his lap, put her arm around his neck, kissed him, and then said:

"Dearest, congratulate me. I am a grandmother!"

And she pointed to the paragraph and looked up in his face.

As soon as he saw what she meant, the funny aspect of the question struck him first, and struck him so forcibly that he burst out laughing and caught her to his heart.

Then she thought certainly that he would be merciful to his daughter. And she pleaded eloquently for her, but pleaded in vain. Then she tried to laugh and jest and coax him into compliance with her wishes.

"I want to see my little grandchild," she said; "I am so fond of children, and Heaven denies me children of my own; and I want to see my little grandchild so very, very much!"

"What a funny little grandmother! what a fairy little grandmother! Ay, that will do—a fairy grandmother!" smiled the old banker, running his fingers through the soft brown curls that nearly hid the face of his young wife.

So he jested with her, and he laughed at her and petted her, but he would not yield one inch to her wishes.

That same day, however, Angela ordered her brougham and drove to "Asser's," in Regent street, and

spent a hundred guineas on a complete and beautiful outfit for the infant, comprising embroidered robes, slips and underclothing of the finest fabrics and trimmed with the most delicate lace, and also a decorated berceaunette.

These she had packed and directed to "Mrs. Charles Faulkner, care of Captain Faulkner, Brighton Barracks." In the inside of the parcel was a card on which was written the line:

For Miss Faulkner, from her fairy grandmother.

Very welcome, you may depend, was the rich present to the poor young mother, living in the captain's limited quarters and living on the captain's limited pay—most of which he spent in wine and cigars. But, though the card that accompanied it bore the words to Miss Faulkner from her fairy grandmother, neither Melinda nor her husband suspected the quarter from which it had come. They could not have guessed that the youthful wife of the banker would ever have written herself down "grandmother," nor could they have given her credit for the least degree of kindly feeling for themselves.

Meanwhile Angela still pleaded the cause of the disowned daughter, whenever she could find a favorable opoprtunity of doing so, until one day, when her lips were peremtorily ordered to close forever upon that subject.

The occasion was this: One morning Mr. Melliss came into her boudoir and laid the *Times* before her, pointing to a paragraph, and saying:

"Child, you once showed me a couple of lines in this paper, relative to the Faulkners, as a reason why I should be reconciled to them. I now call your attention to this article, and request you to consider it cause sufficient to close your lips on the subject of these Faulkners forever."

Angela took up the paper and read an announcement to the effect that Charles Faulkner, Esquire, late of the —— Hussars, had been dismissed from her majesty's service for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.

"Oh, poor fellow, poor fellow! what can he have been doing?" sighed Angela.

"Neglecting his duty, drinking, swearing, swaggering, fighting, gambling and worse!"

"Oh, I am so sorry for him, and for his poor wife; and oh, for the poor child! Oh, surely, dearest, for that poor little innocent child's sake, you will help your daughter now?"

"I wish I may be perfect-participled, if I do! Now, no more, Angela. I will not hear another word on that subject, even from you."

"But, please let me ask a question, then."

"Well, what is it?"

"Where are they now?" she inquired, with a secret thought of helping the mother and child from her own income.

"Somewhere in Tophet, no doubt! I neither know nor care in what exact abyss!" replied the banker, walking out of the room to avoid the subject.

Angela made secret inquiry for the Faulkners, but could learn nothing beyond this—that they had left England for the Continent, that great haven for shipwrecked lives.

CHAPTER XIX.

MADGE'S VENGEANCE.

Affairs were still falling from bad to worse in miserable Junk lane, as well as in many other wretched abodes of ignorance, vice, want and disease.

Rachel Wood began to think that this house was no proper place for her, and that she would have to move away.

There was only one person in the house with whom Rachel Wood could associate with any comfort. This was Mary Kempton, the daughter of the old-clothes dealer on the first floor front. Mary had resisted all the blandishments of the Flowers sisters, and all the scoldings of her own family, and steadily refused to

earn twelve shillings a week as a ballet girl at the Thespian. She cooked the family meals, mended the family clothes and minded the shop, or did anything else they wanted her to do, but she would not go on the stage.

So Mary and Rachel were good friends; with but one point of difference between them. This was their creed. Rachel was a stanch Church-of-England woman. Mary pinned her faith on the coat of the celebrated and Rev. Mr. Sturgeon, and went to a dissenting chapel.

As each of these two young women thought herself right, and entirely and exclusively right, she tried to convert the other one. And this led to frequent warm disputes, the only disputes that ever happened between them. At the end of these controversies, each would pray for the conversion of the other. And all the time both were quite right.

But, of all the ne'er-do-wells in the unlucky house, certainly Tony Brice was the worst, and Madge was the next.

Tony was almost always drunk, and Madge was very seldom sober.

There was this difference between them: Tony, when tipsy, was always maudlin and good-natured—weak in body and mind. Madge, under the same circumstances, was always quarrelsome and excitable.

Tony used to say that the liquor always fell into his feet and made him feeble, and that it always flew into Madge's head and made her furious.

Had Madge been a reader of Shakespeare she might have said: "That which hath made 'him' drunk, hath made me bold."

But Tony was falling into more dangerous ways than even those of drunkenness; he was falling under the fascinations of Miss Fanny Flowers, the fair-haired ballet girl of the "Thespian Temple." And he took to escorting her to and from the theatre, and treating her to gin and cakes when the performance was over, and then, at a late hour, bringing her home. For, bless your soul, "free love" is not by any means limited to "the most enlightened and progressive spirits of the nineteenth century;" it may be found wherever weakness,

folly, selfishness and their kindred vices are present, and good sense, decency and morality absent, whether it be in the palace or the hut.

Madge knew nothing of all this. If she had, her vengeance would have been sudden, swift and sharp.

Madge, with all her faults and her fury, was "true as steel" to her friends, and much too stupid to understand treachery in others.

One day Rachel Wood was sitting at her sewing, putting the last stitches in a dainty undergarment belonging to a set she was making up for a lady, when her door was violently thrown open, and Fanny Flowers burst in, in wild disorder.

"Oh, Miss Rachel," she exclaimed, "I know you look down on us all! But if you are a Christian, come to help us now!"

"Sit down, Fanny! Be quiet, and tell me what is the matter!" said the seamstress calmly, though she was frightened by the girl's manner.

"Oh, Miss Rachel!" exclaimed Fanny, dropping into a chair, and continuing in an excited manner, "Rose has run away, and grandpa has fallen in a fit; and Mrs. Juniper an't in, and I durstn't ask Madge Brice, because she's that down on me! And there's no one to help us, unless you will come!"

Rachel Wood, much shocked, laid aside her needlework, called Fanny to follow her, and walked across the passage to the opposite room, occupied by the Flowers family.

There she found a sad scene.

Old Granddaddy Flowers lay upon the floor, where he had fallen on hearing the news of his favorite granddaughter's elopement, a heavy old man, whom it would require more than one strong pair of arms to lift.

Over him stood Grandmother Flowers, trembling and whimpering and twisting her fingers in impotent sorrow.

"It's rum as did it!" she whined. "It's rum as did it all! It's rum as broke down his constertootion, and it's rum as has runned her to her ruin! Oh, me! oh, me! oh, me!"

By the side of the old man also stood two fair children who had come into the room, drawn by the cries of distress. One was little Suzy, who was looking on, with her hands clasped behind her, and her long, fair hair rolling halfway down to her feet. She had just come home with Fanny, from the morning rehearsal at the theatre. The other was little Benny, who, having, in company with Granny Ruth, made a successful morning's work in filching a bunch of carrots and a link of sausage and some other trifles, had returned to the house to rest from his labors.

The children were gazing upon the fallen man with looks of astonishment and compassion.

"Oh, me! Oh, that I should live to see the day!" whimpered Grandmother Flowers, wringing her hands.

"Come and sit down in your chair, granny, and let me attend to daddy," said Rachel Wood, kindly leading the old woman to her easy old seat in the chimney corner.

"Benny, dear, do you know where Mr. Bentley, the parish doctor, lives?" said Rachel, addressing the child.

"You bet! Will I fetch him?" inquired little Benny, anxious to help.

"Yes; and tell him what you have seen here. You are a very bright boy. You can do it."

"All right! Come, Suzy!"

And the "prodigy" picked up her hat, which had fallen upon the floor, and followed her friend.

"Come, Fanny, lend a hand here," said Rachel Wood; "we must lift daddy and lay him on the bed."

It was easy to say "lift daddy," but it was utterly impossible, with even their united strength, to do it. "Daddy" was a very large and heavy old man, and Rachel and Fanny were both very slight and delicate young women.

"Wait here till I see if I can find help," said Rachel, as she left the room and went into the passage.

The first person she met there was Tony Brice, on his way to his room and to his dinner.

"What's up, Miss Wood?" he inquired "You looks

sorter scared! And coming out of that room, where you never goes."

"Mr. Brice, Grandfather Flowers has fallen down in a fit, and we cannot lift him to put him to bed, and so——"

"Hold hard! Let me come to him," said Tony.

And, passing Rachel, he opened to door of the Flowers' room, and went in. He found Fanny on her knees by the side of the old man.

"Fan, lass, what's this? Why didn't yer send for me?" he inquired, coming up to the group.

"Oh, Tony, I was frightened of my life! Madge is that down on me, because she says as she knows all about it now. Though what she knows all about as can make her so down on me, I can't tell," added the girl, even in her trouble playing the hypocrite.

"Down on yer, is she? She is, is she? Well, let that stand by a little. I'll sort her! Now, then, ladies, what can I do for yer? This here seems to be a bad case!" said Tony.

"We want you to help us lift the old man onto the bed, first of all," said Rachel.

"Oh, that, indeed! Well, I won't help yer to do that, but I'll do it all myself," said the man, squaring his shoulders and essaying to lift the body.

By the exertion of all his strength, he succeeded in effecting his purpose. By the time he had laid Grandfather Flowers on the bed, the door was pushed open, and little Benny, who had been sent for the doctor, ran in, followed by Suzy.

"Doctor says as how he'll be here in one minute!" exclaimed the boy, panting from the breathless haste with which he had run his errand.

"I'm thinking as this be a job for a grave-digger, and not for the doctor," remarked Tony Brice, as he felt first the pulseless wrist and then the motionless heart of the old man.

The parish doctor, true to his word, arrived the moment afterward. He examined the patient, and then confirmed the opinion advanced by Tony, and pronounced the old man dead.

After his funeral his family fell into deeper troubles.

Just as the winter was setting in very cold, Fanny lost her situation at the Thespian Temple. The managers had resolved to try an experiment, which ultimately proved to be an unsuccessful speculation; they resolved to discontinue the "leg-item-ate" drama in favor of the legitimate. And so they disbanded their ballet corps, and engaged a ninth-rate tragedian of the Bombastes Furioso order, to murder Shakespeare at so much a night.

Fanny Flowers was out of employment, out of money, out of spirits, and, as Mr. Tony Brice elegantly expressed it, "down on her luck." Well she might be. She could do nothing but dance, poor creature, and she could get no dancing to do. There was no money coming into her poor room at all. One article of furniture or clothing after another had to be sold or pawned to buy food and fuel, to keep the old woman and herself from famishing or freezing. To be sure, they could both have gone to the Union; but that would have involved loss of home and liberty. And even the most wretched cling to the poorest home as long as they possibly can, and to liberty long after they become homeless; yes, they cling to liberty to the bitter end. That was not the worst of Fanny Flowers' troubles. Her fellow-lodgers all "looked down" on her. Mrs. Juniper would not let her girls speak to Fanny Flowers. Mary Kempton turned her head another way when she passed her. Even kind-hearted Rachel Wood carefully avoider her. As for Madge, she did so glare at the girl with her fiery black eyes that Fanny would fly at the first sight of her.

She had no friends in the house except Tony Brice, whom she was afraid to speak with, except by stealth.

Why was this? Fanny knew well enough, though she would not confess the knowledge to herself.

One fatal evening Tony Brice, being much the worse for a dozen or so "thrippun'orths" of rum, met Fanny Flowers in Ship alley.

"Hey, my lass! how goes it wi' yos? It's many a day since I had a word wi' yer, my girl," he said, turning

about and joining her, and walking by her side. "Which way be you going?"

"I don't know! Any way! The shortest way to my grave would be the best way, I think," said Fanny bitterly.

"Don't yer talk so, lass! Yer knows yer got one good friend in me. Don't talk so!"

"How can I help it? You asked me just now how it was with me. How do you expect it can be?"

"Well, lass, I s'pose yer do miss all the merry dancing and singing at the theatre, and you find it dull like evenings with the old un at home. But never yer mind. Keep a stiff upper lip! They'll want yer back ag'in, some o' these days."

"'Tain't that, Tony! though, true for you, I do miss going to the theatre every evening. It was very gay and pleasant there, say what you will. And then one always got treated by somebody when it was all over. And then there was the salary, which was best of all. But it ain't the loss of the plays and the shillings and all them things, Tony, though I feel them, too."

"Well, then, what is it, my lass? Tell me; I'm yer friend."

"It's everything together, Tony. What, with grandfather's death and Rose's running away, and granny's dropping down into her driveling dotage, and Madge a flying out every time she sees me, and even you a snubbing me——"

"I a snubbing you!"

"Yes; and what, with all that, and the cold, and the hunger, and the grief, and the loneliness, and the fear of worse to come, I get that low in my mind and that wild, as I think some night I shall go and jump off o' London bridge, that I do!"

"Whisht! lass, whisht! You mustn't talk that way. Come home along o' me, and have something hot to drink to put the life inter yer."

And, in the evil hour, the girl fatally consented to invade the forbidden ground of Madge's home.

It was bitter cold December weather, and, though still early in the evening, it was quite dark. There was

very few street lamps in that squalid neighborhood. But there was one at the corner of Ship alley, where they turned into Junk lane. As Tony and Fanny came under this light, in turning the corner, a man passed them coming out of the lane.

"That was Jerry Juniper. He has seen us!" said Fanny, in a terrified whisper.

"Oh, no he didn't lass! And, what if he did? Is there any law ag'in my taking a poor frozen girl inter our room to give her a warm and a drink?"

"No; but he'll tell Madge, and she'll make harm of it."

"Not he! He ain't no michief-maker, an't Jerry. He's a good fellow!"

By this time they had reached the house.

"Now, let us go in separate, Tony. You go first, I'll step down in the pawnbroker's and see if I can get old Moses to give me something on my bonnet. I know he won't; but it will be an excuse, you see. And, then after that I can go upstairs promiscuous like, and when there's no one in the passage I can step into your room and get warm," said Fanny.

"All right, my lass! But you needn't be so feared. Yer an't a doin' no harm."

"No; but they'd all make harm of it, and tell Madge, and she'd tear my eyes out!" said Fanny, as she dropped behind into the shadows, and let Tony enter the house alone.

He went up to his own room, where there was a good coal fire burning. But the room was not unoccupied. Sitting upon the old rug, before the fire were the two children, blue-eyed little Benny and golden-haired Suzy.

Benny was cracking nuts and picking out the kernels for Suzy, who was feasting on them with much relish.

Both the children got up from the rugs as soon as they saw Tony.

"I'm off the boards to-night, Mr. Brice," said the little actress. "I'm off the boards to-night, because they're playing 'Hamlet,' and there are no children in 'Hamlet.' But o' Monday they're a-going to play 'Rich-

ard,' and I'm a-going on again as Little Dookeryoke." (Duke of York.)

"Are you so? How much money you must make! You'll make your fortin one o' these days. What do they give you now?" inquired Tony, much amused.

"Ten shillin' every time I play," proudly replied the child.

"My eyes! that much for playing? I wish I could only get half of that for working!" laughed Tony.

"You didn't mind my fetching o' Suzy in here to have a party by ourselves, did you, Tony? You see, as Suzy told you, she's off to-night, and so I cribbed a handful of filberts from the stand there as I cut round the corner o' Low street, as you comes into Ship alley. And I brings 'em here to make a little party for Suzy, seeing as she's off to-night. You don't mind, do you, Tony?"

"No, my little man, I don't mind! Bless you! I'm a-going to bring my own gal here presently to have a party with her. I don't mind, but Madge will! You bet!"

"Oh, will she?" inquired the child, in alarm.

"Ah!" breathed Tony, as if he meant to express, the less said the soonest mended on that subject.

"You know," said the child, apologetically. "Suzy's mammy have gone along o' my granny and mammy to Pat Doolan's wake, and so Suzy's being off to-night, and I having of the nuts, I thought——"

"As how you might have a little lark here all by yer two selves, and no harm done? All right! Madge needn't know nothink about it, and then she can't make no fuss, can she?"

"No!" laughed the child, delighted at an imaginary victory.

"And so, if you don't tell, I won't, and she'll never know. And, Suzy, listen here! Don't you tell Madge about our little party here this evening, nor who you saw, nor nothink about it, you hear?" said Tony, turning to the little girl.

"No! I never tell on nobody! I could tell heaps and heaps if I'd a mind to! But I'd die fust before I'd be

so mean as to tell!" answered the little creature, indignant that her fidelity should be questioned.

"All right! You shall have some weak rum punch for that," said Tony. And he put some water in the kettle and set it over the fire to boil.

And so the children received a lesson in deception and promise of reward.

"You mustn't let the women know everything, you know, my lad," said Tony.

"No," replied Benny.

" 'Cause women is fools anyhow, you know."

"Yes," agreed Benny.

"All on 'em."

"Not Suzy," objected the child, with a sudden reaction of loyalty to his little friend.

"Oh, Suzy's not a woman, you know!"

"No; so she isn't. She's a infant prodigal," replied little Benny, with some confusion of ideas between the infant prodigy and the prodigal son.

At this moment there was a cautious rap at the door.

"Come in!" said Tony.

The door was opened, and Fanny Flowers entered the room. On seeing the children she would have retreated, but Tony exclaimed:

"It's all right, my lass! All friends here, ain't we, kids? I found 'em here, and couldn't turn 'em out. But they're true as steel, and it's all right, I tell yer. So come in."

Perhaps Fanny Flowers would not have ventured in, but there was neither fire nor food in her own wretched abode. Her feet were wet; she was cold and hungry and sorrowful and she was longing for something to eat and drink, and for some one to comfort her.

"Don't be feared, Fanny! I won't tell!" said Benny, coming up on one side of her.

"No more will I," added Suzy.

Fanny sat down by the fire and put her wet feet on the edge of the old wire fender and shuddered, partly with cold and partly with fear; or was it with presentiment of evil?

Tony made the punch very strong and very hot, and gave one glass to Fanny and took one himself.

Then he weakened some of it with hot water and sweetened with much sugar and gave it the children, who, after drinking it, began to nod, and finally went to sleep on the floor.

"Look a here! I must get out o' this before Madge comes home," said Fanny, as she drained the glass.

"Not till you've had another un, lass! Lor' bless yer! Why, it's only eight o'clock yet, and she won't be home afore one or two o'clock in the morning. You've got hours afore you yet," said Tony, filling her glass from the jug of punch that he kept hot on the hob.

"I'm afeared to drink any more, Tony. And you oughtn't to. That's a fact. The more one drinks the more one wants, and the more one loses of one's head. No; I'd better not take any more. But I tell you what, Tony; save some in the bottom of the jug for poor Granny; she's asleep now; but when I go in, I will wake her up and give it to her. It will warm her, same as it does me."

"All right. I'll save some for the old girl on condition that you'll take another un yerself; and on no other conditions whatsomever."

Thus persuaded, Fanny began to sip the punch with which Tony had filled her glass, and the punch began to get in her head, and to make her feel sentimental, and, strangely enough, penitent.

"Tony," she said, "I've often been thinking as it was wrong for me to be running after you, and taking you off to go back'ards and for'ards with me to the Thespian, unbeknownst to Madge; and worse still, for me to be a spending of your wages, and letting of you spend 'em on me for treats, when I knowed Madge was a wanting of bread!"

"All right, lass! all right," remarked Tony, who was very far gone in drink, and had not the slightest idea of what the girl was talking about.

"And I did make up my mind as I never would do so no more. But only to-night, Tony, I was so cold and so hungry, for I gave granny the last of the bread for

her supper; and I felt so lonesome and comfortless when I met you, Tony, and you so much like a good old brother to me, Tony, that I couldn't help of it."

"All right, old fellow! Old—old fellow!" blundered Mr. Brice.

"But, Tony, this must be the very last time. You must never ask me to come and take a drink with you again—never. Folks think worse o' me nor I am, as you know—worse o' me nor I ever could be! I couldn't be like Rose, Tony, and you know I couldn't. But these treats an't right, and I mustn't have no more of 'em—no, not even if I famish and freeze to death."

"Jus—jus so, old fellow. Give us yer hand," stammered Tony, all unconscious of what was meant, and trying to rise to his feet. But he fell back again into his seat, quite stupid and helpless.

At that moment, in the dead stillness of the house, a stealthy step was heard to approach the room, and a stealthy hand to fumble around in the darkness over the door, as if in search of the handle of the lock.

"That's Madge! She'll kill me!" breathlessly exclaimed the girl, and in the frenzy of her terror she flew to the door and slipped the bolt, thus putting a barrier between her and the fury she feared so much. Of course this was the worst thing she could possibly have done, and she seemed in a moment to realize that it was so. She turned and threw her eyes wildly around the room, as if in search of a way of escape, up the chimney, out of the window—anywhere!

We must now go back a little, to see how Madge happened to come home so suddenly.

Some time before this, Madge had found out all about what she called "the goings on of Tony and Fanny"—the walks to and from the Thespian, the cakes and the gin treats, and so on. And she hated the girl with the hate of jealousy, and assailed her whenever and wherever she found her, and she talked about her to her fellow-lodgers, and set them all against her. And she watched her opportunity of getting a still stronger case against her detested rival.

But for a long time she had watched in vain.

Fanny Flowers, shocked by the flight of her sister and the death of her grandfather, was stunned into something like steadiness. Then the loss of her engagement at the theatre took a great deal of temptation out of her way. Finally her terror of Madge completed the reformation—of her manners, if not of her morals. So Madge found no cause against her, or rather no new cause, until this bitter winter night, when Fanny met Tony in the street, and being cold, hungry, friendless and comfortless, suffered herself to be tempted to eat, drink and be warmed by Tony's fire, in Madge's absence.

Meanwhile Madge was at Pat Doolan's wake, drinking more whiskey in honor of the dead man than was good for her.

Madge was now the same tall, dark, gaunt woman, with the same strong features, great fierce black eyes, and long, wild black hair that we knew first six years ago. She had the same deep hectic spots in her dark, hollow cheeks, the same wild fierce light in her black eyes, and the same chronic cough, of which she never seemed to get better or worse.

She was at the wake, sitting in a closely crowded, stifling room, and holding a tin cup of very bad whisky in her hands, when Jerry Juniper, who had come in some half hour before, found himself near her, and being, like all the others, much the worse for drink, jogged her elbow so that she spilled her whisky, and then he said:

" 'When the cat's away, the mice will play.' "

"What does the fool mean?" inquired Madge, resentfully.

"Lady Bug! Lady Bug! fly away home! Your house is on fire! Your children——' "

"Look here, Jerry Juniper; if as how you're intoxicated, just keep away from me, for I hate sich!"

"Look here, Mrs. Brice, if you go away home right now, when you an't looked for, you'll happen to find something you don't look for."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing! I met Tony a taking of Fanny Flow-

ers home long of him, to take something hot, he said, and have a good time!"

Jerry Juniper, when he saw the face of Madge, was frightened at what he had done. She turned ashy pale, except the two crimson spots on her hollow cheeks, that burned in their deep holes like baleful smouldering fires. Her eyes were fearful to look upon. If honest Jerry had ever heard of the Medusa's head, he would have thought of it now.

Madge dropped the cup from her hands, and without a word, left the house.

With her brain all on fire, she hurried breathless down Low street, whirled around the corner into Ship alley, and down that and around the next corner into Junk lane, and so into her own miserable home. There she suddenly stopped and took breath.

"I must be quietlike now," she said, to herself. "I mustn't let 'em hear me; I want to surprise 'em. And then!——" She worked her fingers in and out like the claws of a tigress—"And then—then—then—then—oh!"

She went cautiously upstairs, and along the passages until she reached the third floor, where her own room was situated. The house was dark, silent and deserted. At this hour nearly all the inmates who were not absent were in bed.

She crept along the side of the passage, feeling her way for the door until she had found it; then, in the same way, she felt over the door for the handle of the lock; but, just as she got hold of the handle, she felt the bolt on the inner side shoved into its place, and she knew that she was bolted out of her own room.

This raised her rage to frenzy, and give her the strength of frenzy.

She knew the bolt was frail. She drew back for a run, and hurled herself against the door with all her force and burst it open!

There was a faint scream from Fanny, who stood in the middle of the floor, paralyzed with terror.

With the spring of a tigress, Madge, her black hair flying, her hollow cheeks burning, her fierce eyes blaz-

ing, hurled herself upon the girl, threw her down on the ground, and with her knees upon her chest, and her long talonlike fingers clasped around her throat, pressed with all her maniac strength, keeping her eyes fixed upon the darkening face and starting eyes of the feebly-struggling victim, and hissing between her clinched teeth:

"Die—die—die! I'll never leave go my hold till you're dead—dead—dead!"

Except for these low tones of baleful hatred, the struggle was as silent as the grave. It did not wake the sleeping children. It did not rouse the drunken man. It continued in deadly silence until the sound of footsteps was heard approaching the room, and Jerry Juniper, who, alarmed at what might be the consequences of his words to Madge, had followed her to the house, now entered.

Seeing the position of affairs, he ran to Madge, seized her, and tore her away from her victim, calling loudly, in the mean time, to Tony for help. But Tony was beyond helping any one.

Madge, however, now exhausted with the violence of her emotions and exertions, made no resistance, but suffered herself to be torn away from her victim.

Jerry Juniper immediately stooped to raise the fallen girl. He was too late. She was quite dead.

"And I did it with these hands," said Madge, holding up her terrible talonlike fingers in triumph.

It was not long before several policemen, attracted by the excitement, arrived on the scene. Poor Madge was promptly handcuffed and carried off in custody.

At ten o'clock a coroner's inquest was held over the body of Fanny Flowers.

Jerry Juniper and the policemen were the principal witnesses. The case was so very clear that, after a brief investigation, the jury made up their verdict that "the deceased had come to her death by strangulation at the hands of Magdalene Brice."

And the same morning the accused was duly committed to Newgate to wait her trial.

Tony Brice was heart-stricken with remorse, grief

and fear. He had been discharged from custody by the same magistrate who had committed Madge to jail. And he had followed her when she was taken to Newgate, and had parted with her there, he weeping, she defiant.

After that he wandered about the streets in a delirious manner, drinking rum as long as his money lasted; but failing in his efforts to drown his trouble in drunkenness. His mental excitement was so great that the liquor for once failed of its usual effect.

Then he wandered home—home no longer for him. He wished to lie down in his own room and rest—forever, if he might. He opened the door, and saw the dead body of poor Fanny laid out neatly upon his bed, and two women watching by it.

He stopped where he stood and gazed at it.

"Mr. Brice," said Mrs. Juniper, who was one of the watchers, "we had to lay her out here, because old Mrs. Flowers' room wasn't fitting. But if you object to it, in course we must move her there, fitting or no fitting."

"I don't object to nothink!" answered the miserable man; "but I wish as some on you would make up a bundle o' poor Madge's clothes and give 'em to me to carry to her this arternoon afore the prisin is shet ag'in friends."

Mary Kempton, who was the other watcher, promised to do this.

Then Tony cast his eyes around the room in search of something he could pawn for money to buy more rum, and catching sight of Madge's Sunday bonnet, he snatched it from its hook, muttering, "She'll never need this no more, anyhow," he left the room.

That night he succeeded in getting himself again into the watchhouse. The next morning he was sent to prison for sixty days.

Poor Fanny Flowers, after having been murdered by a jealous rival, was buried by the parish. And such was the end of one of these poor, pretty silly sisters. Of the other we shall hear presently.

CHAPTER XX.

MADGE IN NEWGATE.

The women of the house carried Madge some clothes. They also went frequently to see her in her prison, but they always found her so wild and mad and intractable that these visits were very unsatisfactory.

Rachel Wood and Mary Kempton got leave, through the prison chaplain, to visit her daily in her cell. And they tried hard to bring her into a more Christian frame of mind; but they tried in vain.

Old Ruth almost lived under the shadow of the old prison walls.

She had taken possession of Tony Brice's vacant room; and she and Benny slept there at night. But in the morning, as soon as she had cooked and they had eaten their bit of breakfast, she would lock up the room and go out with Benny and walk to Newgate, and seat herself on the flagstones under the prison walls, and wait there until the hour came when she could be admitted into the prison yard with other friends of the prisoners. While waiting she would make capital of her troubles, whenever she dared, by appealing to the passers-by, in behalf of "this poor, pretty boy, my lady, whose mother is in jail here, for strangling of a bad girl, as took away his father from her, my lady—which how could she help it? I puts it to you, my lady! But look at him!" she would add, pointing to the fair child, whose pure, sweet, blue eyes were a stronger appeal than the strongest prayer of Ruth.

She made a good living out of this, picking up from half a crown to five shillings a day.

Meanwhile, Rachel Wood was studying how she could possibly help the wretched woman, Madge, in this time of her terrible need.

She had heard it rumored that Madge would speedily be brought to trial. Also that she was not able to engage counsel, and so would have none to defend her but such as the court should please to appoint, and who

would probably be some briefless and incompetent young lawyer, whose service would be a mere form, and who would do her case no good.

Rachel Wood believed Madge to have been insane and irresponsible when she did that dreadful deed. And she further believed that a learned and skillful lawyer would be able to make the jury think so, and thus save the wretched woman's life, though perhaps only at the expense of her perpetual imprisonment as a criminal lunatic.

After thinking over the matter for a few days, Rachel Wood determined to write and tell her only "guide, philosopher and friend," Mrs. Melliss, all about it, and then ask her advice.

"It will be just the same as hinting for her to fee a lawyer to defend Madge; but I cannot help it; I must do it. I cannot let that poor, wretched woman I have known so long come to this dreadful end, if I can prevent it."

So she wrote a full account of the whole affair to Mrs. Melliss, who was still staying at Kemptown, Brighton.

Two days after the letter was answered by Mrs. Melliss in person. She came in a close cab to Junk lane, and, leaving it waiting, went upstairs and rapped at Rachel Wood's door. To the girl's mild invitation to come in, she entered.

Rachel was sitting at her work-table making a shirt, as usual.

On seeing her benefactress, she started up with surprise and pleasure, and went to meet her.

"I got your letter, Rachel," said the lady, as soon as they had shaken hands and were seated together. "I got it on yesterday morning. And, as I had already arranged to come up to London for a few days on business, I thought I would come here and answer it in person."

"Oh, how good you are to come! and how glad I am to see you! This is a dreadful, dreadful misfortune, Mrs. Melliss! I ought not to have troubled you with it! But, indeed, I could not help it! You were my

last hope for that poor creature," said Rachel, with much emotion.

"I thank you very much for telling me. Happy people should do all they can for the unhappy. I pity criminals just as much as I do any other class of miserable people. My dear husband says it is a very great weakness; but I cannot help it. The wretched woman shall have an advocate, Rachel, and a powerful one, too!" said Mrs. Melliss.

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" said Rachel, seizing and kissing the lady's hand.

"The counsel I speak of is my stepson, Mr. Percy Melliss, of the Temple. He is a most learned and eloquent barrister. But he is young yet, and has but few briefs. He is also a large-hearted, clear-visioned man, full of philanthropy and benevolence. I feel sure that he will take up the case with as much zeal, and defend it with as much power, as if he were to receive a thousand pounds for his services."

"Heaven bless him, and you!" fervently breathed the seamstress.

"I have a close cab waiting at the door, and I will take you to see him at his chambers this morning. But before that, I wish you to take me to Newgate, to see that unhappy woman."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Melliss! I'm afraid that the sight of her on her prison bed will be too much for your nerves."

"My nerves! I haven't got any; I never had any. I should be ashamed to have them in such a case as this, Rachel. I mean to go and see that woman in prison. I have seen almost every form of human misery except that of prison life. I mean to see that to-day. So put on your shawl and bonnet, dear girl, and let us go."

Rachel said no more in opposition to the plan, but made herself ready and attended the lady to the cab.

They drove rapidly to Newgate.

It was really the hour for Rachel's usual visit to the prisoner, and the lady and herself were at once admitted to the interior of the prison, and conducted to the cell.

And now, my reader, the scene I am about to describe is not an imaginary, but a real one.

They entered a small stone cell, where, on a very narrow bed, lay the long, gaunt form of Madge Brice. Her long, black hair was wandering over the pillow and coverlet in snaky locks. Her fierce black eyes, deep sunken in their sockets, were gleaming like sparks of fire. Her cheeks were sunken into two deep hollows, where two dark crimson spots burned like coals. Her long, dark, bony arms, bare nearly to the shoulders, were lifted up before her face, while she opened and shut her dark, bony hands, gazing at them wistfully.

"How are you, Madge, dear?" inquired Rachel, kindly.

"Same," answered the woman, curtly, without removing her gaze from the working fingers.

"Madge, dear, I have brought a lady here to see you, and do you good if she can. And she is going to get a lawyer for you, Madge, a first-rate lawyer, to defend you on your trial. Look around at the lady, Madge. She is Mrs. Melliss."

Thus persuaded, Madge turned her gaunt, dark face and fiery eyes upon the visitor with a look that went to the lady's heart.

"What do she care for the likes of a poor wretch sich as me?" muttered Madge.

"But I do care a great deal for you, my poor woman. I am grieved to see you in this situation," murmured Angela, in that low, sweet, loving tone that ever touched the sympathies of all who heard it. And she laid her cool hand on the woman's dark, corrugated brow.

Something in the look, the tone and the touch reached and melted the hardness of that woman's heart. She burst into a passion of wild sobs and tears, the first that she had shed since her arrest; and amid it all she began, in an eager, vehement, incoherent manner, to pour out the story of her wrongs and crimes.

"I could not help it, my lady! She took my own dear man away from me! My Tony was as good a man

as ever broke bread till that gal come over him and witched him. She was young and pretty and gay, my lady; and I were getting old and sickly and mopy. And so she heaved a spell over my Tony, and took his love away from me. And that night! that night! while I was I was at a neighbor's wake, he took his sweetheart into my room, my lady, into mine! And a friend o' mine come and told me. And I flew back home like a flame of fire. And they locked the door of the room ag'in me, to keep me out—out of my own room, and away from my own husband! Then I felt as strong as ten men. I throwed myself ag'in the door, and busted of it open. And I throwed myself upon her and throwed her down like a felled ox. And I got my knees on her breast and my fingers around her throat, and——"

"Oh, hush! hush! poor woman, hush! This is too, too horrible!" murmured Angela, shuddering and covering her face; but Madge could not stop herself.

"I strangled her with these hands, my lady! I used no knife nor club, nor pisen, nor pistil; I did it with these hands!" she wildly cried, rearing up her long, bony arms, and opening and shutting her dark, horny fingers.

"Oh, stop! stop! You must not talk of this now. You are sorry for doing it now, you know."

"Sorry!—I would do it again! I know they'll hang me for it out here in front of Newgate, in sight of all the people; but I don't care. I'd do it again, if I was sure they'd hang me again!"

"Oh, horrible! horrible! She is mad indeed!" muttered Mrs. Melliss, almost regretting that she had made this visit.

But she spoke a few kind, soothing words to the woman, and arose to leave the cell.

"You'll come and see me again, my lady? Your face is the sweetest face but one as ever smiled on me. You'll not keep away from the poor creature who can't get out of this, and who can't repent of what she's done, and who must so soon die on the gallows, and go to burning——"

"Hush! you must not say such dreadful words! We are all going to try to save you, and we hope to succeed. Yes, I will come again. I will come every day while I stay in town. To-morrow I will bring my son to see you, and he will be your counsel," said Angela.

"Your son, my lady? my young, pretty little lady, your son?"

"My stepson," explained Angela.

"Oh! that indeed! I shall be glad to see him, my lady. I thank you."

"And he will be glad to do you good, I feel sure. Now good-by," said Mrs. Melliss, pressing the woman's hand and turning to leave the cell.

Rachel also took leave of Madge, and followed Mrs. Melliss. A turnkey showed them out.

They were soon in the cab again, and on their way to the Temple. They drove on in silence. Mrs. Melliss was too deeply affected by all that she had seen to talk about it, and Rachel Wood forebore to speak.

When they reached the chambers occupied by Mr. Percy Melliss, barrister-at-law, Mrs. Melliss sent up her name, and was at once admitted to the presence of her stepson.

He wes a very handsome young man, tall and very dark like his father, slight and graceful, and gifted with a pair of dark, earnest, eloquent eyes and a deep, full, clear voice, both powerful allies in his profession.

He arose and embraced his youthful stepmother, who then presented her companion, and finally sat down and opened her case.

"I have heard and read of that affair—a very singular one, indeed. And you really think the woman mad?" inqured the young barrister.

"I really do."

"And she has no counsel, you say?"

"None. She is not able to retain any."

"But, of course, you know the court will assign her counsel."

"Yes, some stick!"

"Most likely. Well, I think I shall have to take this case. I have very little to do now. Since you prom-

ised to take me, I will go with you to see this woman. What hour shall we go?"

"At ten. I will call for you here in a cab."

"Thanks. That will do quite well," said the young lawyer.

And then he escorted his youthful stepmother and her companion downstairs and put them in their cab.

"Where shall I tell the man to drive to?" inquired the young lawyer, holding the cab door in his hand while he waited for directions.

"Oh, of course back to Junk lane."

"To—I beg your pardon," said Percy Melliss, who had never heard of the place in his life—"where did you say?"

"Oh, then, to the Brunswick Hotel, Berners street," answered Mrs. Melliss, altering her instructions.

The young barrister repeated the directions, bowed and closed the carriage, and the cab started.

"Our house in Charles street is shut up while we stay at Brighton, and there is no one in care of it except a charwoman in the basement. So I am at the Brunswick, in Berners street, with only my maid. It is a pleasant, quiet house. And I would like to have you stop and take luncheon with me there, before you return to Junk lane," said Mrs. Melliss to her companion, as they drove along.

Rachel thanked her benefactress, but declined the invitation, pleading work waiting for her at home that must be finished by a certain time.

So, when the cab reached Berners street, Mrs. Melliss took leave of Rachel, paid the driver in advance, and ordered him to drive the young woman back to Junk lane.

The next day, according to arrangement, Mrs. Melliss drove to the Temple and took up her stepson, and thence to Newgate, and introduced him to his client.

Madge told her horrible story over again to a very attentive listener, who took notes of her talk.

But she still harped upon two things.

First, that she "did it with these hands, and would do it again."

Second, that "she knew they would hang her, and she didn't care if they did."

The young advocate was very much interested in his strange client, and, after quite a long interview with her, he retired to work up his case.

"She is undoubtedly mad. We shall be able to save her life, but not her liberty," was the opinion he expressed to his stepmother, on taking leave of that lady at the Temple.

That day Mrs. Melliss, having completed the shopping business that had brought her to London, went back by the late afternoon train to Brighton.

The next day Mr. Percy Melliss took an eminent physician to Newgate to examine the mental condition of his client.

And the third day he engaged the attendance of the physician in charge of the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum. And in due time he received the opinions of both these gentlemen, who found the prisoner suffering under mental derangement.

The young advocate worked hard at this case; saw his client almost every day, and sat up nearly all night every night, reading up the subject and taking notes upon it. For there was very little time to spare.

CHAPTER XXI.

MADGE'S TRIAL.

Madge Brice was speedily brought to trial at the Old Bailey, charged with the willful murder of Frances Flowers.

Mr. and Mrs. Melliss came up to town on this occasion, because Mrs. Melliss felt very much interested in the fate of the accused, and Mr. Melliss wished to hear his son plead in a case where it was supposed that he would distinguish himself.

Mary Kempton was also in court, and sat as near to the prisoner in the dock as she was permitted to do.

Old Ruth Drug was there, of course. Tony Brice was not there, being still in prison. Many of the men and women from Junk lane were present, crowding into the lower end of the hall.

I shall give but a brief report of this trial, for it was very short and soon over.

When the prisoner was arraigned at the bar, and asked whether she were guilty or not guilty of the felony laid to her charge, she answered vehemently before any one could stop her torrent of words, and answered by harping upon her two strings:

"Guilty, my lord, if you please to call it so, which I don't; for I did it with these hands, and would do it again. Which I know you will hang me, and I don't care if you do."

The prisoner was ordered to sit down. And, notwithstanding her astounding confession, the trial proceeded.

The counsel for the crown opened the case with a few preliminary remarks, and called witnesses to testify to the murder. These were the Junipers, and the policemen who were first upon the scene of the tragedy. The fact that Madge Brice murdered Fanny Flowers was clearly proved. And the queen's counsel expressed a hope that the jury would do their duty in the premises, notwithstanding the plea of insanity which he understood the learned counsel for the accused meant to set up for her acquittal. The case on the part of the crown was then closed.

Mr. Percy Melliss arose for the defense. He could not have been more in earnest if his client had been a duchess, his retaining fee had been a thousand pounds, and the scene of the trial had been in the House of Lords instead of at the Old Bailey. In a few earnest, eloquent words, he recounted the wrongs that had been heaped upon the prisoner—wrongs, he said, that would have broken the heart of the most patient wife, but that had driven this wild, impassioned woman, with her ill-balanced brain and ill-regulated heart, perfectly frantic with jealousy; so that in a moment of intolerable provocation, and in a paroxysm

of furious frenzy, she had committed the crime for which she stood arraigned, but for which no judge or jury could hold her responsible.

Then he produced his witnesses.

First, in succession, came the women who had lived in the house with Madge, and who testified to the provocations—"aggrawations" they called them—that the prisoner had received from the deceased. After them came the physicians who had examined the prisoner in her cell, and who now testified to her mental derangement and moral irresponsibility.

The case for the defence was closed by the young advocate in a most powerful address to the jury on behalf of the prisoner.

The judge summed up the evidence in a very impartial manner, and then gave the case to the jury.

And it was assuredly due to the learning and logic, earnestness and eloquence of the young counsel for the defence that the jury brought in their modified verdict of:

"Guilty, with a strong recommendation to the mercy of the crown."

The prisoner was immediately remanded to Newgate to await the pleasure of her majesty.

Another case was called. And the friends of poor Madge Brice, breathing more freely, arose and withdrew from the court.

Mrs. Melliss looked around in the crowd for Rachel Wood, and, catching sight of the poor seamstress, beckoned her to approach.

"I saw you looking ready to faint, my poor girl, while you were sitting in the courtroom. And so you must take a seat in the cab with me, and I will take you home before I go back to the Brunswick," said the lady, as the seamstress came up to her.

"But will it not be too much trouble?"

"No; I want a long ride, after sitting still so long."

"But shall I not inconvenience Mr. Melliss and Mr. Percy?"

"Oh! they are not going with me. They have gone

off together to write up the petition which is to accompany the recommendation for mercy."

"Will poor Madge be pardoned, do you think?"

"Hardly! She will probably be dealt with as a criminal lunatic, and imprisoned in the asylum for such persons, during the pleasure of her majesty."

"And that means for life?"

"I think, in such cases as this, that it does."

"Well, madam, at least that poor creature owes her life to your stepson."

"I think certainly she does."

And then they talked of the eloquence of the young barrister, and of other matters connected with the trial, until they reached a certain point, where Mrs. Melliss ordered the coachman to stop.

He drew up before an intelligence office.

"I must go in here, Rachel. My maid is about to leave me. She is going with her parents to Australia. And I have to look up another one. A great nuisance, Rachel! It is all a lottery, in which the prizes are as one in a hundred among the blanks. I don't like ladies' maids as a class. I do wish I could find a tidy, respectable young person who had never been in service before, and would be willing to come to me," said the lady, as she was lifting the front of her dress to step out of the carriage.

"Stop, dear Mrs. Melliss, please!" said Rachel, suddenly. "I know just the girl to suit you!"

Mrs. Melliss sat down in her carriage again, and Rachel continued:

"She is Mary Kempton. She is a pious, intelligent, clean girl; very pleasant looking also. I should not venture to recommend her to you, if I were not sure that you would find her a real treasure. And oh! it would be such a real blessing to her to take service with you."

"How zealous you are! Where is this paragon?"

"She lives with her parents in the lower part of the house where I live. They keep the old-clothes shop that you saw there. She has never been in service;

and all I beg of you, madam, is that you will see her and judge for yourself, before you engage any one else."

"I shall not get out here. Drive to Junk lane," said the lady to the cabman, who was still standing at the door, waiting orders. "I will see her at once," she explained, turning to Rachel, as the man closed the door, remounted to his box, and started his horses. They reached the house in Junk lane. Rachel Wood took Mrs. Melliss up to her own room, and then went downstairs and brought Mary Kempton up for examination.

The lady and the girl were favorably impressed with each other at first sight. And a frank conversation of half an hour's duration confirmed these first impressions.

In brief, Mary Kempton was engaged as lady's maid to Mrs. Melliss at wages of thirty pounds a year; and she was to enter upon her new situation upon the first of the ensuing January. And it was hard to tell who was the most pleased with the new arrangement, Mrs. Melliss, Mary Kempton, or poor Rachel Wood.

A few days after this, Madge Brice's fate was decided. It was to be imprisonment in the Asylum for Criminal Lunatics during her majesty's pleasure.

This asylum was known to be conducted on the most humane and enlightened principles. And this decision gave much satisfaction to all the well-wishers of poor Madge, evcept her old mother, Ruth Drug, who, instead of being grateful, was furious.

"They might as well a hanged her at once and put her out of her misery," she grumbled to any one who would listen. And then to little Benny she said:

"Come, lad. I'm sick and tired of this here place ever since what happened. All the nobs have left this here foggy, smoky, nasty town, and have gone away down to the South Coast, where they say it be mostly clear and mild. Why not we, too? We'll folly the nobs, lad! Well take advantage of this fine weather and tramp down to Brighting. We'll do it afore Tony

gets out o' gaol to stop you. It will be jolly fun for the likes o' you, lad, to go on the tramp," she added.

But Benny did not seem to see it. He was grieving himself almost to death about his "mammy." She had been a very capricious mammy to him—scolding, shaking and beating him much often than petting or caressing him; but still she was the only mammy he ever knew, and he wept over her fate as if his heart would break.

Old Ruth Drug having decided to set out with Benny early the next morning on a begging tramp to Brighton, went into her own room, drank all the rum that was left in the bottle, and laid down to go to sleep.

Little Benny was left to do as he pleased, and he pleased to play about the passages and stairs with his dear little friend Suzy.

On this same day came Mrs. Melliss to give some final instructions to her newly-engaged maid, and also to leave some work with Rachel, and to bid her good-by before returning to Brighton.

She went up immediately to Rachel's room, and requested the seamstress to send for Mary Kempton.

Rachel Wood opened the door and called little Benny from the passage, and sent him on the errand.

Mary Kempton soon obeyed the summons, and presented herself before her new mistress.

Mrs. Melliss gave her some few directions as to how and when she should come down to her at Brighton, and then kindly dismissed her.

When Mary had curtseyed and left the room, Mrs. Melliss turned to Rachel and said:

"I am going back to Brighton by the ten a. m. train to-morrow; but before I go I wish to do something for the poor people. One cannot pretend to help all the poor of London; but one should do something for such as come immediately under one's own observation, you know, Rachel," she added apologetically, and blushing for her own zeal.

Rachel did not reply. She thought of little Benny and Suzy, and the scores of children she knew, who

were growing up in ignorance, squalor and vice. But she also knew that it would be utterly useless to attempt to save them, unless they could be taken by force from the influence of their unworthy parents.

"Tell me now, Rachel, who are most in want in this house?" inquired Mrs. Melliss.

"There is no one here suffering from any cause but idleness and drunkenness, unless they be old Ruth Drug, the mother of Madge Brice, and old Mrs. Flowers, the grandmother of Fanny. Both these poor old women have lost their last daughter by that sad tragedy, and they are almost entirely destitute."

"Here, then, Rachel, here is a ten-pound note. I leave it in your hands for their benefit. Give it to them in such instalments as you deem prudent. And write to me when you require more," said Mrs. Melliss, as she arose to take leave.

Rachel also arose to attend her downstairs.

When they went into the passage a curious thing happened. They found little Benny playing there alone. Little Suzy was gone. She had been carried off by her father to act her part in the matinee at the Thespian. Mrs. Melliss glanced at the boy as he sat playing marbles by himself in the passage, and then she stopped short and looked at him. To be sure, his poor little clothes were both ragged and dirty, his shapely little feet were bare, and his milk-white knees showed through the holes in his trousers. But his complexion was so fair and clear, his features were so regular and delicate, his hair was so fine and golden-hued, his expression was so refined, and more than all, his eyes, as he lifted them to the lady's face, were so clear and frank, and—yes! where had she seen these eyes before?—these sweet, serious, steady, intense eyes? She could not remove hers from the boy. A rare gem shining in a gutter! A fair flower blooming on a dunghill! Such seemed this beautiful child, living in this wretched tenement house.

Was it his beauty alone that fascinated her gaze? Scarcely, for suddenly she started and inquired:

"Whose child is this?"

"He was Madge Brice's. He is Ruth Drug's now."

"It is amazing!"

"What is?"

"The likeness between this boy and the little Earl of Wellrose, the Duke of Cheviot's son and heir."

"We do see strange likenesses in this world," remarked Rachel.

"But this is more than a likeness; this child is the very counterpart, the *fac-simile,* the double of the Earl of Wellrose! How very, very strange! Who is he, did you say?"

"I said he was Madge Brice's child; that is, I mean her foster-child. He was a love-child, left in her charge and then deserted. No one here, not even Madge, knows anything else about him."

"Merciful Heaven!" muttered Mrs. Melliss, in a low voice. "If it should be so! But it cannot be! The duke, even as a young man, bore an excellent character. But it is most strange! Here, Rachel, take this guinea and buy the poor boy a suit of clothes. And here, my pretty boy, take this shilling and spend as you like," she added, as she stooped and kissed the child.

She then shook hands with Rachel and went away.

The next morning, old Ruth, happy in the possession of two sovereigns given her out of the little fund left in Rachel's hands, and Benny, delighted with his new suit of clothes, set out on their tramp to Brighton. Will Benny meet his gracious mother, who is spending the winter there? We shall see.

CHAPTER XXII.

WANDERING BENNY.

The Duke and Duchess of Cheviot were at their house on Brunswick terrace, Brighton, for the winter, or until the meeting of Parliament in February should recall them to London.

They had now been married more than seven years,

and their marriage had been very prolific. There were now five children in the Cheviot nursery. Besides the little Lord Wellrose, aged about six years, who stood in our poor little outcast Benny's rightful place, there were four little ladies—Lady Jessie, aged five; Clemence, three; Hester, two, and Eva, who was still in the cradle.

Never lived there, in any rank of life, a more conscientious and devoted mother than was the young Duchess of Cheviot. She had a very learned and accomplished governess for her children, but she herself was their principal educator. Especially she cultivated in their hearts the love of God and of their fellow-beings. She taught them that "love is the fulfilling of the law." And she brought all good and beautiful influences of religion, poetry, art and observation to cause them to feel as well as to know this central truth of our lives.

The little Earl of Wellrose and the little Lady Jessie Douglas received all these lessons with reverence and affection. The other children were yet too young to understand much about the matter.

If the duchess hoped more from one of her children than from all the others, it was from the little Lord Wellrose—perhaps because he was the Earl of Wellrose, the eldest son and heir, and the only one, as far as she knew. At all events she hoped much from the future of the little earl. She saw in him not the future head of the renowned old house of Douglas-Cheviot, not the future statesman, or minister; oh, no! her vision was higher! for she saw in him the future humanitarian, the philanthropist, the lover of his fellow man, in whose life thousands of other lives should be redeemed and blessed.

Lady Jessie was very like her brother, but she was more impulsive and less intellectual.

And not only by cultivating in her children the love of humanity, but by many schemes of benevolence, did the young duchess seek to serve humanity.

On every one of her large estates she established industrial schools. And even in London, in several

poor neighborhoods, she had opened day schools for the poorest children. And if she had only known anything about that house in Junk lane, she would have hired the largest room in it for an infant school, and engaged Rachel as its teacher. Let us hope that some day her intimate friend, Mrs. Melliss, may chance to drop some words that may call her attention to it. What a happy thing that would be for the poor seamstress, for the neglected children she loves so well, and possibly for little Benny also!

By the way, there was this slight difference between the benevolent instincts of these two ladies:

The duchess, who had never entered the courts of poverty, where she might have seen for herself the utter destitution of that class, but who found in the newspapers much about juvenile depravity, felt a deeper pity for the children, because in their docile infancy they were being formed into criminals, as she read daily in the public prints, than because they were suffering from famine, squalor and disease, of which she knew practically nothing.

Angela Melliss, on the contrary, who was a frequent visitor in their wretched abodes, and who saw with her own eyes, heard with her own ears, and "smelt with her own nose" this hideous state of famine, squalor and disease, even while she deplored the want of moral training that was leading them to perdition, felt a quicker sympathy for their present and more pressing needs, and was more interested that they should be washed, clothed and fed than that they should be schooled.

It would have been well for the objects of their charity could these ladies have combined in efforts for their relief. But, as yet, the Duchess of Cheviot and Mrs. Melliss, each working so zealously in the same holy cause, and meeting so frequently in social circles, had never chanced to meet in their work, or to act in unison.

The young Duchess of Cheviot was enjoying a very delightful season this winter at Brighton, for her

pleasant house was filled with all her best beloved friends.

There was the Earl of Ornoch, who had long been quite reconciled to his cousin, the duchess; and with him his lovely young countess, once Miss Chimboza, and their son and heir, the little Viscount Moray, who was about the same age as the small Lady Jessie Douglas, with whom he was great friends.

And there was Mr. and Lady Margaret Elphinstone, whom we first knew as Captain Francis Harry and Lady Margaret Douglas. Some three years after the marriage of Captain Harry and Lady Margaret, he inherited the estates of his granduncle, and assumed the name and arms of Elphinstone of Harewood—having sold out his commission in the army. Therefore, to avoid confusion, please to bear in mind that our old friends, Captain Harry and Lady Margaret, are now Mr. and Lady Margaret Elphinstone. With them were their two fine children, Victoria, aged five, and Albert, aged four.

A very pleasant party, which none enjoyed more than the children. There were eight of them, you will observe—four boys and four girls.

They had spent Christmas holidays charmingly, and they were now about to wind them up with a Twelfth-day party for the little ones.

Before Brunswick Terrace, as every one knows, is a beautiful verdant square, green even in the dead of the winter. A large reception-room fronting this square was selected and decorated with flowers, for the children's Twelfth-day party. A splendid Twelfth-day cake had been ordered at Mouton's, and had been sent home that morning.

At an early hour of the evening, or rather at a late hour of the afternoon, the children, gayly dressed, assembled in this room, where they engaged in many enlivening games. Later on they were joined by their parents and friends. And as the crowning event of the feast, the Twelfth-day cake was to be cut, and he or she who was so lucky as to get the slice with the ring in it was to be crowned with a holly or a Christmas-rose

wreath, king or queen of Twelfth Day, and was to select his or her consort.

There was no butler or footman needed here to wait. The Twelfth-day cake stood upon its stand on a round table in the center of the room, and the Duke of Cheviot chose himself to cut it, and the duchess to distribute the slices to the eager and expectant children.

The duke and duchess, now that they had been married seven years, and had a family of five children around them, were in no may else changed since we knew them first. The duke was the same "Bonnie Willie Douglas," the duchess the "Glad-eyed Eglantine."

Amid the skipping and dancing, chattering and laughing of the irrepressible young ones, the great cake was cut and the slices distributed. And now all was anxiety to know who should be the favorite of fortune, and find the ring in his or her slice.

"Mamma, dear," said the little Lady Jessie Douglas, holding her own slice daintily in her hand, so as not to break the snowy frosting, or to drop a crumb, "please, may I do what I like with my slice?"

"Certainly, my love," replied the duchess, in some curiosity, as her "glad eyes" questioned her little daughter.

"Then, if you please, mamma, dear, I should so like to give it to a poor little boy I saw out on the pavement. I saw him through the window. There he is now," said the little lady, holding her cake carefully in one hand while she parted the crimson curtains with the other.

"Very well, love, you shall send it to him. Thomas!" —this to the hall footman.

"Oh, mamma! please, please, I want to give it to him myself. I want to see his face when he get it. I would rather see his face when he gets it than eat the cake myself. Please, please, mamma, dear, let me give it to him myself, and see how he looks! Won't he be glad?"

How could the young mother, consistently with her principles of humanity, check the benevolent impulses of her little daughter, even when they seemed, as in this case, slightly absurd?

"Thomas," she said, to the same footman, "go and bring in the little boy that Lady Jessie points out."

The tall footman touched his forehead in respectful silence and turned to obey.

"Here, Thomas; it is that little pale boy, standing by that old, old woman. Do you see him?" inquired the child.

"Yes, my lady," answered the man, again touching his forehead, as he went out to follow the directions given him.

My acute reader has already surmised that "the little pale boy and the old, old woman" on the pavement outside were no others than little Benny and his granny.

They had tramped and begged their way from London to Brighton, stopping at the tramps' lodging-houses in the villages on their road each night, and resuming their journey in the morning. They had occupied a week in their journey, and had, as old Ruth said, "made a good thing of it." Almost any one who had anything to spare was willing to give a penny, a crust or a bone to the fair boy or to the poor old woman, and some were both able and willing to give more.

They had reached Brighton three days before the Twelfth Day, and they had taken lodgings in a miserable tramps' lodging-house in one of the back slums of the town.

The old woman tied a green shade over her eyes and permitted Benny to lead her through the streets as though she were blind.

They formed a pair that would have deceived even a metropolitan policeman—that fair, beautiful boy, with his clear, pure blue eyes and his pathetic voice, and the seemingly aged and blind grandmother whom he led.

That night when they returned to their miserable lodgings, and old Ruth counted their gains, she found that they had bagged three shillings and nine pence, in silver and copper coins.

"Pretty well for one day, Benny."

"Yes, granny."

"You've been a good boy to-day, Benny, a very good boy, indeed. Come, kiss me now!"

And little Benny put his arms around the old crone's neck and kissed her with much affection. And he honestly believed that he had been a "very good boy" that day, and he felt quite happy that night.

The next day being another fine one, they went forth again. On this occasion they went down to the beach. And Benny led about his "poor, old, blind granny," and begged for her in the same manner and with the same success as on the preceding day.

In the course of their walk, they came upon a very interesting group—a nursery governess with her young charge—not an unusual sight on the Brighton sands in the height of the season, only this group was so unusually beautiful.

It was Miss Neville, the pretty nursery governess from Brunswick terrace, with the Duchess of Cheviot's lovely children.

Attracted by her smiling face, little Benny immediately addressed her:

"Please, ma'am, only one penny, for my poor, old, blind granny."

"You poor child!" murmured the gentle girl, gazing with compassion on the fair, refined face of the beggar boy, and mentally contrasting it with his coarse clothing and bare feet, as she drew a sixpence from her pocket and dropped it in his hand.

While he was very sweetly thanking her, the little Cheviot girls crowded around him. Here was an especial object of charity! Such a beautiful little beggar boy! And oh! so much like their own brother Wellrose! thought the little ladies, as they searched their pockets for small silver coins.

But before they could offer him any money, little Lord Wellrose, who had been playing at a short distance, came up, and came through the group to see the little beggar.

And the two brothers—the earl and the outcast—stood face to face. How much alike they looked! Both had inherited the delicate features, the fair complexion, golden hair and the clear blue eyes, the sweet,

serious, steadfast, penetrating eyes of their father, "Bonnie Willie Douglas."

They gazed at each other with a strange mutual fascination.

"Why—why do you go barefooted, boy?" at length inquired the little earl.

"Please, sir, because I ha'n't got no shoes," answered Benny, quite truly.

"But you have very good clothes on. It is unusual to see a boy with such good clothes and bare feet at this season," said the boy earl.

"Please, sir, a lady guv Miss Rachel Wood money to get me these clothes, and she got 'em and put 'em on to me."

"I wonder why she didn't get you shoes at the same time."

"Lord Wellrose, my dear," said Miss Neville, gently, "you should not cross-question the poor boy. Be considerate, my love."

"I am so, Miss Neville, dear. But I wish to know all about this class, for when I grow up and have the power, I mean to do something," answered the little earl, precisely in the same hopeful spirit in which his poor brother, the little outcast, so often talked of what he should do when he should "git a big man." Then, turning toward the beggar boy, he inquired:

"Why didn't the lady give you shoes as well as clothes?"

"Please, my lord, I had a pair o' shoes, which they weren't so old then; but I wored 'em out on the tramp, I did, your lordship," said the child, upon whom the little earl's title spoken by Miss Neville had not been lost.

"Jessie!" said little Lord Wellrose, "how much money have you?"

"Oh, Alick, I'm so sorry! I spent all my money buying shells on the pier. And I didn't care for them either, for I gave them away the next minute," answered little Lady Jessie.

"Have you any, Clem?"

"I have one shilling, Alick, dear," replied the small Lady Clemence. "And you may give it to the boy."

"An' I's dot a sispens, Alit. An' 'ou may div it to de 'ittle boy to buy sooz wiz," said little two-year-old Lady Hester.

"Hetty, you are a duck! Hand over the sixpence. So are you, Clem! Produce your shilling. Eighteen pence between you! Jessie, I'm ashamed of you! Where do you expect to go when you die? To the rich man's heaven, I suppose! And you know where that is," said the little lord, significantly, as he searched his own pockets and drew forth a few small silver coins, which he proceeded to count. "Three and six here, and eighteen pence between you two; five shillings in all. Miss Neville, dear, is this enough to buy this boy a pair of shoes?" he inquired, turning toward his governess.

"Yes, love, and a pair of socks also," answered the governess, who, acting under the direction of the duchess, always encouraged the children in acts of self-denial and benevolence.

"Here, then, little boy, take this and go and buy yourself a pair of shoes and stockings," said little Lord Wellrose, offering his money.

"Stop, love," the governess interrupted; "I think you had better take the footman and go with this boy to some shoemaker's shop on the King's road, and have him fitted with a pair of shoes, and then pay for them. And afterward take him to a haberdasher's shop and give him two pair of socks. Here is another sixpence, love, to buy the second pair of socks."

"Oh, thanks, Miss Neville, dear. I'm so much obliged. Come, boy!"

"I cannot leave granny," objected little Benny, loyal to the wretched old imposter, though sorely tempted to follow the little Earl of Wellrose, his own unknown brother.

"Oh! Miss Neville and my sisters will see to her, until we return. Will you not, Miss Neville, dear?" confidently inquired the little lord.

Extraordinary as the proposal was, Miss Neville good-humoredly consented to stand guard over the

"blind" beggar until the return of her guide.

Then the little lord and the little beggar, attended by the footman, went up the cliff together on their way to the King's road.

As soon as they were gone, Miss Neville—who, as the daughter of a clergyman, knew much more of the character and habits of tramps and beggars than do other young persons, and knew that they frequently took out their children barefooted and half naked in the bitterest cold weather, not from necessity, but for the purpose of exciting pity and gaining alms—Miss Neville, I say, turned to the so-called blind woman, and said:

"We shall probably see you and your little leader quite often, in our walks upon the beach."

"Yes, ma'am, it's like as you'll see us often. I wish I could see you as well," whined the old impostor.

"Let that pass," said the governess, who had her suspicions about the reality of the blindness. "What I wish to impress upon you is this: that, as we shall see you often, I shall always look to see whether the poor child who accompanies you wears the shoes that will be given to him. If he does not, if he comes out barefooted again, I shall feel obliged to recommend you both to the attention of the proper——"

"Oh, ma'am, dear!" interrupted the old deceiver, "you'd never go for to mistrust me of selling or pawning my own dear, darling Benny's boots, would yer?"

"I was not suspecting you of any such design. But only a few days ago little Lady Jessie Douglas here gave an old woman a good, warm shawl, and the next freezing day we found the same old woman on the beach without her shawl. When questioned about it, she told us a falsehood; she said her shawl had been stolen from her. But upon investigation we discovered that she still possessed the shawl, but would not wear it even in the coldest weather, because 'it spoiled her trade.' Ladies and gentlemen seeing her comfortably clothed would not give her so much alms. And such was the cupidity of that old woman that she would risk her life for 'more alms.'"

"Oh, my pretty lady! do yer go for to think as I am one o' them sort o' cattle?" whined the crone.

"I hope not."

"No, indeed, my pretty, I ain't that sort."

"Now, what I wish you to understand is this: That your little leader must wear the shoes and stockings that are given him, even though his doing so should injure trade, for we will not have his health suffer."

"Surely not, ma'am, not on no account," said the old hypocrite, with a show of great feeling.

Presently the little earl and the little outcast, attended by the footman, came down the cliff together, Benny delighted in his new shoes, and Lord Wellrose pleased with the pleasure he had given.

When Benny had again thanked his small benefactors, and they had sufficiently admired him, the governess gathered her flock together and took them home to their fold on Brunswick terrace.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHILDREN'S PARTY.

It was the next evening after this, just as the lamps were lighted, that little Benny and his grandmother, in the course of their rambles, found themselves on Brunswick terrace, on the upper walk, between the houses and the green square facing the sea. The weather was very cold, and the ground was covered with a thing coating of snow and a slight glazing of ice. But Benny wore his new shoes and stockings, and never felt so comfortable before in all his little life.

They were passing on, when the sudden lighting up of one of the houses attracted Benny's attention, and he stopped to look at it.

He saw the brilliant lights from within, glowing through rich crimson curtains, and shining redly on the snow without. The shutters were not closed, nor did the middle edges of the two sides of the curtains meet,

so it happened that little Benny caught a glimpse of the interior of the room—a room glowing with lamplight and firelight over its rich red furniture, and decorated with exotic flowers, and half-filled with little children gayly dressed and holding festival.

"Oh, granny," exliaimed the child, in delight, "that's like heaven!"

"What's like heaven, little fool?"

"That—in there!" said Benny, pointing to the glowing crimson windows, through which the scene within was visible, and going as near the house as he could, and gazing at the life within. "Oh, yes, that must be like heaven!"

"Yes, dearies, that's like heaven, and that is heaven, the only sort of heaven, and none but the rich folks can enjoy it. It ain't for the likes o' you and me, boy," snarled old Ruth.

"Lors, no, granny! Why, I don't think as how if I was to hook and crib fur you all day and all night, and git you as much as five bobs a day, as ever that would make I good enough to go to that sort of heaven!"

"No, Benny, that it wouldn't; 'cause you couldn't hook and crib enough, after all. But that's the way them and sich as them got their heaven—by hooking and cribbing; ay, and by lying and murdering as well! And yer couldn't do that, yer know, Benny, and so yer couldn't enj'y their heaven."

"No, granny; but when I git a big man I can."

"Aye, aye! Come along, boy; we must be going home," said the old creature, rising from her seat on the curbstone.

But just at that moment the boy suddenly caught sight of a face at the window, and exclaimed:

"Oh, granny! I do believe as how them is the little swells as guv us money on the beach yes'day! Please, granny, stop! I want to watch 'em!"

"I want to be getting on home. I want my toddy and to go to bed," said the old woman.

"Jest one minit, granny!" pleaded the boy.

"No, I keep on a telling of you! Come along!" growled the old woman, crossly.

The boy sighed, and was about to turn from this beautiful glimpse of a happier life than he had ever imagined, to go and crouch in his miserable dark, unholy den of a home, among thieves and drunkards, and worse, of both men and women, when the hall door of that happy home opened, and a tall footman came out and passed through the iron gate, and came directly up to little Benny.

"Please, sir, I wasn't a doing of no harm, sir; only a looking on, sir," said little Benny, who naturally supposed that this liveried servant had come to order him away. "Please, sir, I am just a going to move on, sir!"

"No, you're not! not if I know it! You've got to come right in to her grace."

"Please, sir, don't take me! Please, sir, I ain't been up to nothink! I ain't, indeed, sir!" pleaded little Benny, holding back and preparing for a run.

"Who says you have, little pig's head? What are you afraid on? Nobody's a going to hurt you. Her grace will have you in there, that's all. The children are a having of a Twelfth-night frolic, with a Twelfth-day cake and that. And her ladyship, little Lady Jessie, has a fancy to have you in and to give you her slice of cake. There, now you've got the whole on't. So come along!" said the footman, taking hold of his hand.

Benny still hesitated, until old Ruth stooped and whispered to him:

"It's all right, dearies! You go. It's one of them fine ladies' whims. They has their whims, dearie. And, to do 'em justice, they's mostly willing to pay for 'em! Now come along here with me a minit," she added, drawing the boy away to a safe distance, and then whispering: "And when yer get inside o' that fine house, keep yer eyes open and look sharp like a good boy, and see what you can hook for yer poor, old granny—a silver spoon, dearie, or a fork, or a napkin ring, or somethink. Do you mind, dearie?"

Little Benny smiled and nodded intelligently. And the old temptress led him back to the footman.

"There, my man, there's my precious lad. Take him in to the gentlefolks. I'll wait here for him till you

bring him back. And, oh! if you'd please to remember the poor old grandmother waiting out here alone in the cold, and would bring her out summat to warm her poor old insides, it would be a blessing on yer, young man," she whined.

"I'll ask the housekeeper. And maybe, as the boy is going into the hall, I may get leave to come and fetch you into the kitchen, and give you something comfortable by the fire," said the good-natured young fellow, as he led Benny away.

"Blessings on yer handsome face for that, young man!" sighed the old hypocrite, as he left her.

Thomas, the footman, led little Benny into the house through the servants' door and then discreetly took him first to his own room, where he made him wash his face and hands, and comb his hair, and brush his clothes, and clean his shoes, before going among the little ladies and gentlemen.

Then he took him upstairs and opened the door of the room where the children were holding their festival, and, seeing Lady Jessie nearest, he announced the new arrival as:

"The boy from the sidewalk, please your ladyship."

"Why, he is the same boy we met yesterday on the beach," said the little Earl of Wellrose, coming up to welcome the little outcast Benny.

"Of course, he is the same boy. I saw him standing looking over the iron railings, and I knew him in a moment, and that is the reason I wanted to have him in," said Lady Jessie.

"And I divved him sispens to buy his sooz," put in two-year-old Lady Hester.

"Oh, Hetty, Hetty, you mustn't talk of what you give. That is not pretty. You must never 'let your right hand' you know," said little Lady Clemence, gravely shaking her fair curls.

Meanwhile Benny stood dazzled and dumfounded, until the fair young duchess floated toward him, and said, very sweetly:

"My boy, don't be frightened. My daughter wishes

to give you a piece of the Twelfth-day cake, that is all. Take it, child, and sit down and eat it if you like."

And Lady Jessie put the cake in his hands, and told him where to sit.

Now, little Benny, beggar and thief as he was being trained by old Ruth to become, was, nevertheless, in his heart and soul, by nature and inheritance, a very perfect little gentleman. He thanked the duchess and thanked Lady Jessie, and sat down where he was told to sit.

"No, break your cake, little boy. You must know that there is a gold ring in some one of these slices, and it has not been found yet. It may be in yours. But whoever is so lucky as to find the ring becomes king of the Twelfth-day if he is a boy, and then he must choose his queen. But, if a girl should find a ring, she is queen of the Twelfth-day, and must choose the king. There, now, break your slice and see," said Lady Jessie.

Fair, kind faces, sweet, soft voices all around him, soon set little Benny at his ease. He smiled and broke his cake in two, and lo! the ring dropped out.

The children all clapped their hands and laughed with glee to think that the little beggar boy from the sidewalk had drawn the prize that was to make him king of the Twelfth-day.

But, as for Benny, he looked aghast, as if a little serpent, instead of a ring, had dropped from his cake. And the sight of his face made the children laugh the more.

"What is the jest?" inquired the young Duke of Cheviot, bonnie Willie Douglas, bonnier than ever now, as he re-entered the room and joined the merry little group.

The laughing children explained the matter in a few words.

"And now, what is to be done, papa?" inquired Lady Jessie, the little contriver of all the mischief.

"Why, the play must be played out, of course. By every rule of right this little fellow is king of the Twelfth-day, and must be crowned accordingly," said the duke, laying his delicate hand on the golden-haired head of the boy, and looking kindly down upon the fair,

refined face that was turned up to his, and that was—oh! so like his own, though he did not think it.

"But he will not know what to do," objected Lady Jessie.

"A not unusual dilemma of kings!" laughed the duke. "He must be instructed by his ministers. Here, Wellrose, my son, tell this young king what he ought to do."

The little earl came forward with two wreathes, one of holly and one of Christmas roses, and he said:

"First, I must put this holly crown upon your head. That is to make you king."

"Oh, certainly. The crown makes the king! Nothing else on earth is required to do so," laughed the duke, good-humoredly.

The little Earl of Wellrose then set the holly wreath upon little Benny's head, and the scarlet berries glowed brightly among their shining deep-green leaves amid Benny's golden curls. All the children laughed with delight, and Benny laughed in sympathy, and was pleased because he could please them.

"Oh, is he not beautiful?" exclaimed some of the children.

"And, oh! isn't he like Wellrose?" inquired the others.

"Now, then, king, you will take this crown of Christmas roses and look around over the ladies present and select one of them as your queen. And you must take this crown and drop on one knee at her feet and make any pretty speech that comes into your head, and offer it to her. And, if she is so good as to accept it, you must then rise and set it on her head. There, that is as much as you will be able to remember at one time. After you have done that, I will tell you what next to do."

Benny, obedient, anxious to please, took the crown of roses, and looked around in a great bewilderment; he seemed unable to make a selection amid such a bevy of little beauties.

"You don't know whom to select. I must help you again. Suppose you take Jessie? She gave you the slice of cake in which you found your ring that made

you king. I think you ought to take Jessie," said little Lord Wellrose.

"No," said Benny, very gently; "no; I'm loking for that lady.

"What lady, boy?"

"That lady. There she is! I see her now."

And, without another word, he walked across the room to the sofa where the duchess sat, and he dropped on one knee before her, laid the rose crown at her feet, and looked up into her face in silence. He could not make the pretty speech that had been suggested to him.

"Is this for me, my boy?" inquired the duchess.

He looked at her in dumb distress. Tears filled his eyes. He had been borne in her bosom. He was her first-born child. She was his mother. He did not know this. She did not know this. Yet the bond of bonds was mysteriously felt by both.

"Am I to be your queen, little king?" she inquired, good-humoredly, taking up the wreath he had laid at her feet.

The boy attempted to answer, but burst into tears, and covered his face with his hands.

"Why do you weep, my child?"

"I don't—don't—don't know. It's you, ma'am; and some—some—somethink here!" sobbed the boy, putting his hands to his throat and chest, and breaking into hysterical sobs.

The duchess was scarcely less distressed, especially as soon as she saw and recognized the wonderful likeness between this little beggar boy and her own noble son, the heir of a dukedom. But the likeness taught her nothing. She only thought that it was strange, and felt that it was distressing. It reminded her of a poor, pale baby she had once seen, who, poor and pale as it was, bore a marvelous resemblance to her own infant son. But she never thought of identifying that baby with this boy.

"What troubles you, my poor child? I wish you could tell me," she sweetly said to the weeping boy.

But for every kind word she uttered, Benny wept the

harder, while the little ladies and gentlemen gathered around and gazed on him in surprise and dismay.

"Oh, this will never do," said the duke, coming up. "This has been too much for the poor boy. Eglantine, love, we allow our little ones too much liberty. This child from the streets should never have been brought in here for their amusement. It may be sport for them, but it is death to him, according to the fable. It is all very well to bedeck dogs and donkeys with wreaths and ribbons to make fun for children; but human creatures, even of the lowest degrees, are not to be treated so."

Thus spoke the young duke, like many another well-meaning young man, of any rank in society, talking with authority of what he knew nothing about.

"I do not think it was done for sport. I think it was done in kindness, dear Willie," said the duchess.

"At any rate, you see that the boy is distressed by his position. Here, Thomas," he called to the hall footman, "take this little fellow out to his friends."

Thomas, the discreet footman, took little Benny by the hand to lead him away. But Benny caught up a fold of his mother's sapphire-velvet dress, and pressed it to his lips before he left her presence.

Thomas took the child down to the servants' hall, where old Ruth—as a great condescension on the part of the servants, who, in this instance, imitated their masters, was permitted to sit by their fire, and was even solaced with beer and cold meat and bread.

"Tawe me home, granny. I want to go to sleep," said little Benny, wearily, and misunderstanding his weariness.

"Come along, then, my precious," said the old woman, who had her own reasons for escaping.

The kindly footman let them out through the servants' door.

When they had walked a long distance between Brunswick terrace and the wretched alley wherein the house stood which they called their home, old Ruth produced from her pocket, a salt-cellar, and said:

"Look here, dearie! Here's a silver salt-cellar as I hooked. It's wuth at least two pun ten."

The article she produced was but a poor plated thing belonging to the servants' dinner service, and worth at most eighteen pence, but she thought was of solid silver, and so it was the same to her, so far as influencing her movements went.

"Oh, oh! That was a great haul, wasn't it?" exclaimed little Benny, in admiration.

"Wasn't it, though? Now, what did you hook?"

"Nothink," said the boy, feeling very compunctious.

"Well, in course, yer couldn't a had the chance. But now, Benny, dearie, seeing as I have made sich a great haul, we mustn't stay here no longer. We must go on the tramp this werry night, or the bobbies will be after us all along o' the silver salt-cellar!"

Benny accepted every word his granny spoke, as having the highest authority he knew anything about. And so he followed her into the house, and helped her to tie up their two bundles, and then followed her out.

They took the old turnpike road, and started on their tramp to London.

The next day the salt-cellar was missed. But it was such a mere trifle that nothing was said about it. The servants clubbed and bought another one. If it had been of solid silver, as the old thief supposed, there would have been more stir.

The next day also the duchess, who could not get over the strange interest she felt in the boy, caused inquiries to be made for him. In vain. The boy and his grandmother had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MISERY.

It was on a dark, cold rainy night that a miserable old beggar woman sat crouching in a corner, near one end of London Bridge.

She drew her tattered red shawl closely over her head and shoulders, and cramped herself all up in a

heap, to keep out of the way of passengers, and escape being ordered off by the policeman on duty there.

And so she sat and watched through the deep darkness and the driving rain.

And so she had sat through many a night and watched for one who never came, for one whom she longed yet dreaded to see.

The weather was so dismal, the passengers so few, that there seemed but little chance for the fulfillment of her hope that night. But still she sat in the deep darkness, under the driving rain, and moaned and watched.

Several forms, men, women and children, passed her, singly or in pairs, or in groups, at longer or shorter intervals. She saw them, but took no further notice.

At length a girl, wrapped from head to foot in a tattered cloak, staggered past.

The old woman tottered to her feet and clutched the cloak, exclaiming:

"Oh, Rosy, have I found you at last? Don't go for to do what yer a thinking on, Rosy, but come home long o' me."

"What do yer mean by stopping me, yer drunken old tramp? Let me go!" exclaimed the stranger, as, with a volley of blasphemy and obscenity, she twitched herself out of the old woman's grasp and went on.

"Mistook me 'oman ag'n," sighed the watcher, as she sunk back into her corner. "Well, and she means to throw herself over, let her do it. Happen it will be the best think she can do for herself. Eh! there's my girl now!" she added, as she rose again to her feet and confronted a young girl who was walking slowly toward her.

"Rosy! my Rosy, is that you? Come along o' me home, Rosy, and don't do what yer a thinking on!"

"I'm not your Rosy, poor woman," replied the girl, in a sweet, sad tone, and she threw back the hood of her rusty tweed cloak and revealed a very pale, worn but still fair young face.

"Not my Rosy? No; but yer somebody else's gal. And yer in trouble fit to break yer heart. Now, don't

go for to do what yer a planning on, dearie. Come home 'long o' me. Maybe, if I saves you this night, the good Lord will save my Rosy. Come home 'long o' me, and leave off thinking o' that."

"You mean the river? Well, I'll not deny it's a temptation to the likes o' me; but I'm not thinking o' that. I'm afraid of what comes after. I don't want to lose my soul. I want to repent and save it, in the little time I have left."

"Er, then come along wi' me," pleaded the beggar.

"Nay," said the young tramp. "I am going to my mother. She will take me home, an' I were ten times as bad as I am. And she will let me lie down and die on her bed."

"It mayn't come to that, dearie. But yer right to go to yer mother. But not such a night as this, gal. What possessed yer to start for a tramp sich a night as this?"

"I was turned out of my room. I was homeless."

"Then come home long o' me for the night, dearie; and start fair by daylight, in the morning. I am going along home presently, but not just now. I must watch for Rosy a little longer. There, don't cry, dearie. Set down alongside o' me and tell me all about it."

The weeping girl sobbed forth her thanks and sat down under the shadow of the old beggar's crouching form.

"Now tell me all about it, dearie, and maybe it may make me forget my Rosy for a minute. Where did you come from, dearie?"

"You know Patcham?"

"No, I know nothink but Lunnon."

"Patcham is down in Sussex. My mother is a laborer's widow there. She has a house full of small children. She goes out to work by the day, but has a hard time of it to find bread for so many little mouths. That's why I come to London to get into service. I got into a place to nurse children. One day when I took the children into the park, I met the Devil. And he spoke to me. And I liked his looks and his speech. And after that I met him very often. At last I left

my good place and took service along of him—the Devil. Now what's the use o' my telling you any more? You know. Your Rosy's case, you see. You haven't told me, but I know she met the Devil as much as if you had."

"Aye, aye, that she did! And my old man died of shame and grief. And I cursed her, I did; from the bottom of my heart, I did! But now I hear she's a houseless wanderer in the streets, afeard to come home. And I know how that ends. And my heart cries out to her, for she was my daughter's daughter. And I sit myself here, night after night, to 'fend her from herself if she comes this way. Oh, gal, gal! trust the mother that bore you, or her mother, but don't take to the dreadful river!" whimpered the old woman, rocking herself to and fro.

"I do trust my mother, and will never try the river. I trust my mother, and trust One my guilty lips must not name; but He knows my sin has broken my heart, and He will have mercy. I am going home to die. Mother will let me lie down on her bed, and she will send for the good curate who taught me in the Sunday-school years ago. And he will help me to crawl back to the foot of the cross, where is forgiveness and salvation even for me. Then there will be a new grave in the old churchyard. And mother will tell Lucy—that's my next sister—how sin leads to death! But mother's heart will be at rest, like mine!"

There was a tone of sorrow, humility and resignation in the girl's manner that was very touching.

"I wish yer wouldn't talk so, dearie. Yer werry young to die," moaned the old woman.

"But, oh! it is so sweet to think of going home and lying down on mother's bed to die, to rest after all the black trouble. It is so much better than I deserve. But He is good."

"Aye, aye, dearie! So Rachel Wood says. I knows nothink about it. I never saw a Sunday-schooler; no, nor likewise a churchgoer. I wasn't—— Who's them?"

This last question related to two figures seen ap-

proaching. When they drew nearer, the strange girl, peering through the darkness, answered:

"It is an old woman and a little boy."

And at this moment the travelers, for such they seemed, drew very near; and the boy, full of pity for those whom he considered homeless beggars, left the woman's side and went up to them and asked:

"What's the matter?"

"Little Benny," exclaimed the woman, raising her head, and recognizing the child's voice.

"Why, it's Missus Flowers, granny!" he cried to his companion—"it's Missus Flowers and Rosy!"

"No, it an't Rosy, little Benny. I wish it was!" sighed the old woman.

"An't it, though? How's Suzy, then, Missus Flowers?"

"I don't know, Benny. I don't live there now. I couldn't pay the rent for that big room; so I've got a front room on the ground floor, down in Wellesley Court. Is that your granny with you, Benny?"

"Yes, Missus Flowers."

"Come here, Ruth Drug, and sit down alongside o' me to rest. We quarreled when we parted, so we did, Ruth; but don't you bear no malice. I don't bear none to you, for my heart's broke with losing my old man and my gals and being all alone in the world. Come, neighbor, and sit down and rest."

"I don't care if I do. I don't bear no ill will, I thank my goodness," graciously replied old Ruth, who certainly never had the slightest just cause of offense against her poor old neighbor.

"That's good. Now, I've got a thimbleful o' gin in my bottle, and would yer like it to warm yer, this dismal night?" kindly inquired the old woman.

"Aye, for I'm just stiff and sore and tired, and—— Thanky," said old Ruth, as she took the offered bottle and put it to her lips.

"I thought yer went to Brighting, Ruth?"

"So I did; but the sea air didn't agree wi' us, dear, so we just tramped back."

"And got in to-night?"

"Just. We walked from Croyden to-day, and I'm dead beat. Has Tony Brice, my son-in-law, got out o' prison yet?"

"Yes; and he come home and sold all the furniture in his room, and yours, too; and he paid the rent and went away, I don't know wheres."

"What—what did you say? What did he do?" inquired old Ruth, aghast.

Granny Flowers repeated her story.

"And so there an't nothink, not even a bed left in nyther of the rooms?"

"No, nor nothink. Which the rooms theirselves is let out to other parties: like mine is, too, for I couldn't pay the rent, and I had to leave."

"Sold all my gal's furnitur, and run away with the money! the——" Here old Ruth discharged a volley of profanity utterly unreportable.

"He didn't run away with the money,Ruth. He paid the rent, and I reckon there wasn't much left. And he went away. I don't know wheres. But don't fret, Ruth Drug. Come along home with me by and bye. I've a room in Wel's'ly Court. I used to have two beds, yer know."

"Missus Flowers, I can pay for my lodging, I thank yer kindly," replied the tramp, confident in the imaginary possession of a heavy salt-cellar, as well as in a matter of twenty-three or four shillings in money. "But I'll come to yer house all the same, thank yer; and we'll have summat hot for supper."

"Aye, that'll be good!" chuckled Granny Flowers, smacking her lips, for in all her troubles, she had not lost her keen relish for "something good to eat."

"Well, then, now I'm rested, what are we waiting for?" demanded old Ruth.

"For my poor, lost gal! Eh! I cursed her bitter that black day she went wrong and broke the poor old man's heart! But I heerd lately as she were wandering about the street homeless, because she is afeard to come. And I'm afeard of her coming to the river. And here I come o' nights to watch for her."

"And how many nights have you been doing this?"

"This one makes seven."

"And how many more do you mean to watch?"

"Lord knows—I don't; till I find her. That's all I can say. Rosy!"

CHAPTER XXV.

DESPAIR.

There was no mistake this time. The prophecy of the old mother's soul was fulfilled. While they had been talking, a slight female form had stolen past them in the darkness and climbed to the parapet of the bridge. Just as she was preparing for the fatal plunge, the old woman caught a glimpse of her form. Recognizing her by heart rather than by sight, she sprang and caught her skirts and called aloud her name.

The young woman started, shivered and fell back upon the bridge.

But several hands extended broke her fall, and bore her fainting form to the sheltered corner of the bridge, where the strange girl supported it in her arms, while the old grandmother administered such restoratives as were at hand—gin and water.

When the miserable wanderer opened her eyes and looked around and saw who was about her, she burst into hysterical sobs and tears, and cried out:

"Why did you stop me? Why didn't you let me drown myself and my sins in the river?"

No one answered her but Granny Flowers, who, tenderly caressing her, said:

"Because I loved yer, dearie."

"But if I live I shall bring still more trouble on you."

"Yer couldn't live to bring no trouble on me as sore as yer death would be, Rosy, my little Rosy!"

"Oh! what a wretch I am! What a wretch I am!" wailed forth the girl, covering her face with her hands.

"You are my own poor, pretty little Rosy! Yer all

I've got left in this world. And an't I all you've got, too? Tell me that."

"Yes, you are! you are! and I don't deserve to have you!" sobbed the girl, stealing her arm around the old woman's neck.

"Well, never mind, dearie. You and me'll let bygones all be bygones now. And we'll go home and live together, and be happy," said Granny Flowers, soothingly.

"I heard about poor old grandfather's death, and all the dreadful things that happened after I had gone. Oh, it was so horrible! It helped to drive me to that deed you prevented!" sobbed the girl.

"Don't talk about that now, dearie. It can't be helped now. And talking about it won't do no good, but will only make you worse. Come home, along o' me. And you and me'll live together, and be happy again."

"Ah! how can we ever be happy again, after all that has passed?"

"I mean peaceful, honey, peaceful. I didn't just mean quite happy. I suppose we can't be quite happy no more, but we can love one another and be peaceful."

"And I'll hook tea and sugar for you, Rosy! Don't cry!" whispered little Benny, putting his small hand on her forehead.

"Come, now; try to stand up and walk, and we will help you home," said Granny Flowers, trying to assist Rose to her feet.

"Is the young woman drunk?" inquired a policeman, coming up.

"No," exclaimed Ruth Drug. "Can't you see for yerself as she's only sick and weak, yer purblind, pigheaded——"

What further Ruth said need not be set down here.

"I can walk well enough," said Rose, stumbling up.

"And now who's this other young 'oman?" inquired Ruth Drug, referring to the strange girl, who now joined their party as if she belonged to it.

"Oh! a friend of mine, as is comin' home to stay all night with me," answered Granny Flowers.

"My name is Mary Field," put in the girl.

"Be yer a-goin' to set up a lodging-house?" sarcastically inquired old Ruth.

"Happen I may," coolly replied Granny Flowers, as she led the way to her humble home.

Her home was in a poor courtyard by the waterside. Her room contained two small beds, a rickety table, three crippled chairs, a rusty little stove, and a tiny corner cupboard half filled with some cracked crockery ware, a very few cooking utensils, and about a couple of handfuls of coals and chips.

Old Ruth Drug went out to the nearest cookshop to buy the materials for the promised hot supper.

While she was gone, Granny Flowers lit a candle and kindled a fire.

When firelight and candlelight fell upon the forms of the two girls, even old Granny Flowers, used as she was to the sight of misery, shuddered to see what wrecks they had become.

"Wretches," they had called themselves, in their bitter self-accusation. Wrecks they were. The words, in their cases at least, were synonyms.

Rosy's one beautiful red and white complexion was now dark and sallow; her lustrous black hair was rusty and tangled; her laughing bright eyes were dimmed and sunken.

"And she so young!" moaned the old grandmother to herself, as she gazed upon this ruin of her child.

The other "wreck" was scarcely less forlorn in aspect. Once evidently a fresh and blooming country girl, fair-haired, blue-eyed and bright complexioned, she was now scarcely more than skin and bone, a walking skeleton, with a deathly white face.

"She told the truth, poor dearie! She is going home to die, if she be even so lucky as to hold out to get there," sighed old Mrs. Flowers, as she looked at her.

Then she made the two girls come and sit close to the fire, while she put the kettle on to make tea for them.

Presently old Ruth came back, bringing a basket, from which she produced, first a plate full of fried liver and bacon, which she covered up and set upon the hob

to be kept hot, next a paper full of rolls, a pat of butter and a bottle of rum, all of which she placed upon the rickety old table.

She was followed by little Benny, his fair face beaming with benevolence and satisfaction—nay, triumph, as he went to Rosy and put two oranges in her lap, whispering:

"Here, Rosy; don't cry no more. I hooked these 'ere for you and t'other poor gal. I did it sharp, I tell you, while granny was a-buying of the rum."

Now, this girl knew perfectly well that this child had done wrong, and done so in total ignorance of the wrong. Yet she did not set him right. She thought his act a trifle. Her feverish palate thirsted for the forbidden fruit, and she took it and smiled. And then she put her arms around the boy and drew him to her bosom, and kissed him fondly, and said he was "a good boy—such a dear, kind, good boy!" and she "loved" him.

"Is it good, Rosy? Do you like it? Is it good and sweet?" he inquired.

"Yes, darling; but not so good and sweet as you are," said Rose, squeezing him affectionately.

"Now, mind, I'll hook you another one to-morrow. Bless you, I an't afraid," said the delighted child.

Before Rose could reply Granny Flowers called them to their supper, which was now steaming on the table.

The two old women, the two girls and the boy gathered around the humble board.

The two old women did full justice to the meal.

Rose was more thirsty than hungry, so she drank a great deal of tea, and ate but little.

Mary Field, on the contrary, with the ravenous appetite that distinguished some types of consumption, fed very heartily.

And after supper, when old Ruth pointed out to her the bed on which she was to rest, she was the first to lie down and go to sleep.

The others sat up until they had finished the bottle of rum, and then they, too, followed her example.

In the morning old Ruth Drug received and accepted

a proposition from Granny Flowers to the effect that the two should join housekeeping and live together in that little room, Ruth and Benny occupying one bed, while Granny Flowers and Rosy used the other. They were to divide expenses; and little Benny, pleased with the arrangement, was to beg and steal for them both.

That same morning, after breakfast, Mary Fields prepared for her foot journey to Patcham.

The old women helped her from their slender store. They made her up a little bundle of provisions.

Old Granny Flowers had a great deal of pity in her nature, as may have been seen.

And even old Ruth Drug, abominable old wretch that she was, had, away down in some recess of her dried-up bosom, some little drop of the milk of human kindness left. So even she gave the gal a shilling, out of the one and twenty she had left.

And so the traveler departed.

And now, if you care to hear any more about this poor girl, type of one class as she also was, I have only to tell you that she lived to reach her home, but not much longer.

There the previsions of her soul were realized. She died peacefully in her mother's arms, and was buried in the old churchyard.

And now I have another death to record before I close this chapter—a death that no one will regret.

One morning, about a week after the old women had joined housekeeping, old Ruth Drug took from her wallet that electro-plated salt-cellar which she had stolen from the table of the servants' hall, in the Duke of Cheviot's house, on Brunswick terrace, Brighton.

Still fondly believing it to be of solid silver, and worth two guineas at the very least, she concealed it in her bosom and sallied forth to the den of a friend of hers.

He was a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion, and also a receiver of goods and melter of metals. He bought whatever of plate or jewels that was offered him, asking no questions—stipulating only that they

should take for their articles whatever he offered in return.

When old Ruth offered her stolen salt-cellar for sale he informed her that it was not silver, but electro-plate, worth at second-hand about sixpence.

Whereupon old Ruth, in her disappointment, went home, drank a quart of gin, went to sleep, and the next morning was found dead in her bed.

The parish doctor, called in haste, pronounced the death to have ensued from apoplexy, and sent a notice to the parish authorities. And the third day thereafter old Ruth Drug was buried at the parish's cost.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LITTLE BENNY'S CARES.

Little Benny mourned for the horrible old witch who had misused and misled him—mourned for her as if she had been the best, wisest and most affectionate of mothers, and for a long time he refused to be comforted.

But Rose caressed and petted him more than he had ever been petted and caressed in his life.

And Rose and her old grandmother were poorer and more destitute than ever; and Rose was ill, as every one could see, and her granny, was rapidly failing with old age. They could neither of them earn anything for themselves. They were often cold and hungry, without the means of procuring food or fuel.

So at length little Benny aroused himself from his selfish indulgence in sorrow, and went forth to beg and steal for them, as he had done for old Ruth Drug.

He enjoyed more liberty now than he had ever had in his little life before.

And the first use he made of it was to visit the house in Junk lane and inquire after his little playmate, Suzy Juniper.

He found no one that he knew left in the house ex-

cept Moses, the pawnbroker, and Mrs. Kempton, the old-clothes vender, whose shops were on the ground floor front.

He inquired of Mrs. Kempton, whom he found sitting behind her counter in a perfect grove of dangling clothes, of the friends he had left behind him when he tramped with his granny to Brighton.

And he was told that his stepfather, Tony Brice, had sold out and gone to parts unknown; that the Junipers had moved away to a house near the theatre, where little Suzy was now earning a living for the whole family; that her daughter, Mary Kempton, was at service with a lady at Brighton, but that they were all to come up to town early in February, when all the other fine folks came.

"And please, where is Miss Rachel Wood?" inquired little Benny, feeling very much desolated by this exodus of his old friends, and hoping that this one at least might be left.

"Oh, Miss Rachel has her home there still, but she is now engaged by the week making up linen for a young couple as is going to housekeeping; and so she only comes home Saturday nights," said Mrs. Kempton.

"And this is Monday, and I can't see her for most a week!" said the child, in a disappointed tone.

"But where's your granny, Benny?" at length inquired Mrs. Kempton.

"Lor'! don't you know? Poor granny's dead! She's been dead these five days!" cried the child, bursting into tears and weeping as if his heart would break.

"There, don't cry so hard, poor little fellow. Come in and sit down, and tell me all about it," said the kind-hearted creature, leading the boy into the shabby back parlor, all hung around, like a shop, with dangling dresses.

She gave him a seat and a glass of beer, and then repeated her request to hear "all about it."

And Benny told her of their return from Brighton, and their arrival in London on that rainy night, and their meeting with Granny Flowers and Rosy and the other girl on the bridge, and their joining housekeep-

ing with old Mrs. Flowers and Rosy in Wellesley Court; and finally, of his granny being found dead in her bed, and being buried by the parish.

"Well, there, then, don't cry no more. Your poor old granny is better off!" said Mrs. Kempton, who doubted her own assertion very much, but considered it the proper formula, and went through it.

And Benny cried all the more, after the manner of mourners, because he was desired not to do so.

At length he looked up and inquired:

Please, Mrs. Kempton, have you heard anything about my poor mammy?"

"Not a word, Benny. But you know the gentlefolks did say, when she was sent there, as they treated the patients very well."

Benny sighed.

"And now I tell you what, my boy, if you ha'n't got no other place to go to, just you stop here long o' me. I shan't begrudge you a mouthful o' wittels, and a shake-down among my own children, till I can get a place for you; which the dear knows as they may be orphints some of these days. So hang up your hat, my poor little man, and make yourself at home," said the tender-hearted mother.

"Thanky, ma'am, I would like to, but I mustn't," said the little fellow, regretfully.

"Mustn't, Benny? Why? You're not afraid of father?" she said, referring to her husband.

"Father's the softest-hearted man as ever you see. He wouldn't turn a dog out, much less a orphint boy."

"Oh, no, ma'am, I ain't afraid o' Mr. Kempton. I'm too fond o' he for that. But it's jes this way, ma'am. Granny Flowers and Rosy. Granny, she's so old, she's hardly able to stir now. She seems like she give out all of a suddint, soon's ever she found Rosy, and fotch her home. And she can't do nothink for herself. And Rosy, she's awful sick, and can't do nothink for herself neither. And they hasn't nobody to look out for 'em now but me. And I must stay by 'em, and look out for 'em," Benny explained.

"You, poor child! What can you do?" inquired the woman.

"Oh, lots! I keeps 'em in things! And when I get a big man, big enough to crack a crib, I'll perwide for 'em handsome," said Benny, taking up his little hat to go away.

"Well, my little fellow, when you want a home or a friend, come to me," said Mrs. Kempton.

Little Benny pulled his forelock and thanked her, and then went away to the Temple of Thespis to try to find his playmate Suzy.

This fair-faced, sweet-voiced boy seldom got himself snubbed, even by irritable officials. And so, when he civilly inquired of the box-keeper where little Miss Juniper, the "Infant Wonder," was, he was told that she had just been taken home from rehearsal. And when he further ventured to inquire where she lived, please, sir, he received full directions to her abode, which was very near at hand.

He found Suzy's family—they were Suzy's family now, for she supported them all—established in two comfortable rooms in a house in the large court at the back of the Thespian Temple.

He found little Suzy up to her eyes in business, and half wild with excitement.

The play of the evening was to be the "Midsummer Night's Dream."

Suzy was to play the part of "Titania, Queen of the Fairies."

And she was to wear a dress of silver gauze spangled with silver stars, and a crown of silver spangled with crystals, and silver slippers, and to carry a silver sceptre in her hand. And her splendid dress was quite ready, and her part was perfectly committed to memory.

She had been studying it for a week and rehearsing it every forenoon, and she felt perfectly confident of her success.

"And, oh, Benny, if you could only play King Oberon to my Queen Titania, I should be perfectly happy! And I don't see why you can't go on the stage and be a

boy 'Infant Wonder,' same as I'm a girl, for you're a heap clever'n I am," Suzy exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"No, I an't, Suzy. I an't clever. But when I git a big man I'll do something for you to make a fortin, so you needn't go on no stage no more."

"Oh, but I like it!" broke in Suzy with animation; "it's just splendid! And mammy says when I git a big lady, I shall make heaps and heaps of money, and may marry any lord I like! But I don't want no lords, Benny."

"No more do I, "Suzy."

"I only want you, Benny!" frankly confessed the little girl.

"And so do I you, Suzy," as frankly responded Benny.

"And when I get a big lady, and makes heaps of money, I will buy a theatre of my own, Benny, and you shall be manager and shall play just what parts you like; and won't that be nice?"

"Slap up!" said Benny.

And he could have staid all the afternoon talking with Suzy, but that he remembered poor old Granny Flowers and Rosy, cold and hungry, in their miserable court, waiting for him to bring them the means of getting something to eat.

And so he got up to go away.

"You and Suzy have been letting of your tongues run so fast, Benny, as I haven't had no chance to ask after your granny. How is the old 'oman, Benny?" inquired Mrs. Juniper.

"Oh! don't you know? Nobody don't know, seems to me, till I tell 'em," said Benny, sitting down again and bursting into tears.

And then he told his story, and had his cry all over again.

And when he was cross-questioned he told all about Granny Flowers and Rosy's illness and destitution, and how he meant to stay with them and take care of them.

"Dear me! And you are all they have got to look to?" sympathetically inquired Mrs. Juniper.

"Yes; and I'll take care on 'em, too," replied Benny, valiantly.

"And if you were an 'Infant Wonder,' you could do it! And I don't see why you can't be an 'Infant Wonder' as well as me, and play Oberon to my Titania," said Suzy.

"I ha'n't the gift, Suzy. I wish I had!" humbly responded Benny.

"Dear me! And they're both sick, and an't got no tea, nor sugar, nor bread, no nothink in the house!" repeated Mrs. Juniper.

No, they ha'n't. But don't fret about that, ma'am! I'll be sure to get something for 'em afore I go home. I allus does—somehow. I an't never failed 'em yet. And never will. You'll see!" said the boy, rising and taking up his hat.

Once more he paused and turned his hat round and round, and then hesitatingly inquired:

"You ha'nt hearn no news of my poor mammy, have you, Miss Juniper?"

"Yes, Benny, I'm happy to say, I have. Juniper and me went out to see her on the regular visiting day—which once a month it is, Benny. And I'll take you there next month myself. And she's as comfortable as she can be, Benny. She's a deal more comfortabler nor ever she was in her born days before. Why, it's a heavingly place is Hanwell, Benny! with fruit trees and forty-piannies, and pictures on the walls, and plenty to eat and drink, and dancing every week, and good clothes to wear, and heverythink as you could mention, and a chappil to go to church in, and a bathroom and heverythink!"

"Is mammy happy?" plaintively inquired Benny.

"If she an't, it's her own fault. There's heverythink to make her so."

"I wish she hadn't a done it, though," murmured Benny, turning pale at the memory of the murder.

She wasn't herself when she done it, or she wouldn't a done it. Everybody knows that. Because if they had a thought she'd a been herself when she done it, they never would a sent her to sich a heavingly place as

Hanwell, where they have peach-trees and piany-fortes and geese and lectur' rooms and heverythink as yer heart could desire. I'll take you there next wisiting day, and you shall see for yourself, Benny."

"Thanky, ma'am. But did mammy send me any word, please?"

"N-no, Benny; but then, you see, we had told her as you and the old 'oman was gone upon a tramp to Brighting. And so I s'pose she didn't think as we'd see you so soon. But never mind, Benny; next wisiting day I'll be sure to take you there to see her, you know."

"Thanky, ma'am," answered the child, setting his little hat upon his head.

"Stop a bit, my boy. You needn't go yet. I must make up a little parcel for poor old Mrs. Flowers. I allus did like the poor old body. And, lor'! why, I can afford to help a friend in need now! Suzy's getting two guineas a week at the Thespian, besides what the other children can earn when they go on as supes once in a while."

As Mrs. Juniper spoke, she busied herself with making up a small parcel of tea, one ditto of sugar, one of sliced bacon, and one of rolls. She tied them all up in an old handkerchief and gave them to the child, saying:

"Now, Benny, that handkerchief an't worth much; but you can give it to Granny Flowers, with all the rest what's in it. And give my love to her, and tell her as I'm sorry to hear she's ill. And likewise tell Rosy as I'm glad to hear she's come back home. Which I hope now she'll mend her ways. Now, don't forget to tell her that, Benny; as I hope she'll mend her ways."

"No, ma'am, I'll not forget. Thanky, ma'am," said little Benny, as he took up his bundle and went out.

And for that day at least the child was saved from the sin of stealing and the shame of begging.

But for the days that followed, in that bitter cold winter weather!

CHAPTER XXVII.

RACHEL WOOD IS STARTLED.

Parliament met as usual, early in February. The *beaumonde* returned to town. The *Court Journal, Morning Post* and other papers chronicled, among others, the following arrivals:

The Duke and Duchess of Cheviot, at Cheviot House, Piccadilly.
The Marquis and Marchioness of Shetland, at Park Lane.
The Earl and Countess of Ornoch, at Westburne Terrace.
The Countess Dowager of Ornoch and Lady Katherine Moray, of South Audley street.
Mr. and Lady Margaret Elphinstone, in Brooke street.
The General and Mrs. Chimboza, in Hill street.
Mr. and Mrs. Melliss, Charles street.

Others came to town, whose arrivals were nowhere chronicled. Among the latter was Rachel Wood, the poor seamstress.

She had been engaged to sew by the week with a family down in Sussex, whose married daughter was going to housekeeping.

She had bargained to be allowed to return home every Saturday night, for the sake of attending her own church on Sunday.

But it happened that the weather became so very severe, and the family she served was so kind, that she did not once avail herself of her privilege of returning to town once a week. On the contrary, she considered it a privilege to remain with her friends in the country until her engagement with them was completed.

Then she returned home, "for good."

Rachel Wood had scarcely rekindled her fire in the cold grate of her room, in the house at Junk lane, than Mrs. Kempton called to see her, full of news that she was eager to tell.

And over the cup of tea and plate of toasted muffins, that Rachel soon prepared, Mrs. Kempton told her how the place had changed since she had left.

How the Junipers had left the house and had taken

rooms near the Thespian Temple, where little Suzy was engaged at two guineas a week, and how they were all prospering.

How Tony Brice, overcome with the shame of all that had happened to break up his family, had immediately after coming out of prison, sold all his bits of furniture, given up his rooms, paid his rent and departed, no one knew whither.

How old Granny Flowers had held on to her own apartments, selling or pawning her goods piece by piece, for money to buy food or fuel, until, failing to pay her rent, she had been turned out by the landlord, and had found lodgings in a wretched, tumble-down tenement-house in Wellesley, or, as she called it, Wesley Court. How she had roamed the streets by day and watched the bridges by night, searching for her Rosy, until at length, some few weeks since, she had found the girl and taken her home; and how much trouble there might be ahead for them both.

"And, now, Rachel, give me another cup of that tea, for I'm hoarse through so much talking," said Mrs. Kempton.

"But you haven't told me anything about little Benny and his granny. Are they still on the tramp?" inquired Rachel, as she served her visitor with another cup of the beverage "that cheers."

"Oh, Lor' bless you, no! They come back the same night as Granny Flowers found Rosy. They all happened to meet on Lunnun Bridge. And old Ruth, having no place to go to, along of Tony selling of the furnitur' and giving up the rooms, old Ruth, she sets up and goes and jines housekeeping, she and Benny, along of Granny Flowers and Rosy, which she hadn't a-been living there more'n a week when she died."

"Died!"

"Yes; found dead in her bed. Parish doctor said 'apoplexy.' I reckon rum!"

"And so old Ruth Drug is dead!"

"Yes, and buried by the parish."

"And poor little Benny?"

"Why he was the werry one as come and telled me

all this as I've telled you about him and his granny and the Flowerses. He was here a Monday two weeks ago. He promised to come back a Saturday to see you, as I expected how you'd come home according to promise, and telled the child so, which you didn't."

"The weather was too severe, and my kind employer insisted that I should stay. But I feel sorry the child should have been disappointed."

"Oh, it was all one to him, for he didn't come himself."

"Oh, he didn't!"

"Not a bit of it. It was a horful snowstorm, you know."

"I don't think a snowstorm would have stopped little Benny. It must have been something else. When did you see the child last?"

"Not since that time he first came—a Monday two weeks gone. Two Saturdays have passed since then. This here is the third Saturday. Mayhap he may come to-night to see if you have returned, Rachel. If anything can fetch him, it will be the hope o' seeing you."

"I feel anxious about the child. What can have kept him away? Can he have been sick all this while?" inquired Rachel Wood, thoughtfully.

"I don't know. How should I? He looked orful thin and pale like when he was here; but, then, he allus was that, more or less, you know. However, maybe he'll come to-night, seeing it's Saturday, and then you'll see for yourself."

Rachel Wood shivered, and stirred the fire into a blaze, and then went to the window and looked out. Finally she returned to her seat and sat down, still shivering.

"I hope not," she said. "I hope that poor child will not come out to-night, if he has got any sort of a roof over his head. It is bitter cold, and growing colder every hour. It is going to be an awful night, Mrs. Kempton."

"Aye, is it? And Mary'll not be coming home to-night, either, I'm thinking," said the old-clothes woman.

"Mary! Is she back?"

"Oh, yes. Mr. and Mrs. Melliss have been in town these two weeks. And Mrs. Melliss do be so good as to let Mary come home every Saturday night to see me. And every time she comes she do be asking after you, and saying as her missus has lots of work for you as soon as you gets home."

"I shall be very glad to have it. I do think, if it had not been for Mrs. Melliss, I should have been one more to fill the ranks of starving needlewomen."

As they spoke, there came the sound of hurried steps upon the stairs and along the passages, followed by the unceremonious entrance of Mary Kempton.

"Why, it's Mary!" exclaimed the mother, jumping up and kissing her daughter.

"I'm so glad to see you, Mary!" added Rachel Wood, rising to welcome her visitor.

"So am I to see you, Rachel. They told me mother was up here, and so I took the liberty of coming right up," said the girl.

"Quite right, Mary dear! I am glad you did. And now take off your bonnet and cloak, and draw up to the fire. This is dreadful weather, isn't it? Your mother thought you wouldn't venture out in it," said Rachel, as she helped her friend off with cloak and bonnet, and hung them up to dry.

"Oh, it wasn't near so bad when I started; but, goodness! it's snowing, hailing and raining all at once, I really do think! And freezing as it falls. And the wind blowing great guns, and the sleet cutting one's face like needles! Yet, the worst night I ever did see in all my life, I really do believe!"

"Never mind, dear! Snuggle up close to the fire, and put your feet up on the fender, while I make a fresh cup of tea that will warm you. And mother will toast you a muffin, I know," said Rachel, kindly, as she replaced the kettle over the fire.

"Aye, that I will," said Mrs. Kempton, splitting a muffin and putting one-half of it on a toasting-fork.

"Whew! how it blows!" shuddered Mary Kempton, cuddling to the fire.

"Your misses will not go for to expect you to come back through such weather as this, Mary, will she, my girl!" anxiously inquired Mrs. Kempton.

"Oh, no, mother! She told me she thought we were going to have a very bad night, and if so, as I needn't come back to-night. And as how Joanna, the upper housemaid, would dress her and sit up to wait on her when she comes home from the party to-night."

"Oh! Mrs. Melliss is going to some grand party to-night!" responded Mrs. Kempton, with all a woman's love of gossip and eagerness to hear more, as she buttered the toasted muffin and put it between two hot plates and set it on the hob to keep it hot until the tea should be ready.

"Grand party! I believe you," said Mary, significantly.

"Then she is not afraid to turn out in this weather," observed Rachel Wood.

"Who, she? Not much—not with her warm shawls and ermines and wrappers of all sorts from head to foot, and her close-cushioned brougham, and all that—why should she fear the weather?" laughed Mary Kempton.

"Why, indeed! But, Molly, dear, where is this grand party to be?" inquired Mrs. Kempton.

"Oh, at the Duchess of Cheviot's! Such a splendid ball! a sort of opening of the season, you know," said Mary, enthusiastically.

"And do tell, Molly, my girl, what will Mrs. Melliss wear?" inquired Mary's mother.

"Oh, such a heavenly dress! White tulle over white satin, like piles of drifted fog on snow, you know; the tulle looped up with snowdrops. And diamond jewelry, you know. I laid it all out for her before I came away. And Joanna will dress her. I almost envy Joanna!"

"Come, now, dear, turn to the table. Here is your tea and toasted muffins; enjoy them while they are hot," Rachel Wood advised, as she sat the teapot on the table.

Mary Kempton turned her chair to the board, and addressed herself to the comforts before her.

Rachel Wood and Mrs. Kempton also reseated them-

selves at the small table and took each an extra cup of tea for company.

And then they all really enjoyed their tea and toast and warm coal fire all the more, listening to the roaring winter storm without.

Suddenly they were startled by a rap at the door.

"Come in," said Rachel, in a tone of surprise, as wondering who could want her on such a night; but thinking also that perhaps it might be some messenger from Mr. Kempton for his wife or daughter.

The next moment there entered the room a poor, ragged, wet and shivering figure, that the three women immediately recognized as Judy Malony, a daughter of that Pat Malony of Wellesley Court, at whose wake nearly all the denizens of the house in Junk lane had assembled on that fatal night of the ballet girl's murder.

This miserable, half-frozen and half-famished creature looked down on the comfortable tea-table and the cozy fire and the three women who were seated there—looked down on them with eyes askance, through the envy, hatred and malice that is too often born of bitter poverty; and then, before any one could speak to ask her what she wanted, she broke out, in a biting tone:

"Yes; you can all sit here, eating and drinking and feasting! And there is poor Rosy Flowers starving to death on her bed, without a mouthful of food between her lips these five days! You can sit here roasting and toasting yourselves before this hot fire, and poor Rosy Flowers a freezing on her bed, without a blanket to cover her, or a stick of wood or handful of coals in the house! You can sit here talking and joking and laughing, and that poor girl and her new-born baby weeping their lives away in cold and hunger and grief. And you call this being Christians! Shame on you!"

Judy had raved off the whole of her speech before the three women recovered from the panic into which her words had thrown them sufficiently to reply.

Rachel Wood was the first to speak.

"For mercy's sake! I hope this is not so bad as you

say, Judith Malony! Rose Flowers starving, freezing, dying! I hope it is not so bad as that!"

"Come and see!" replied the girl, savagely. "You've got a warm shawl and thick shoes. You needn't be afeard of the storm."

"I will come this moment," said Rachel, rising at once.

"And I will go with you," added Mary Kempton.

"Girls, girls, think of what you are about! You will both catch your deaths!" urged Mrs. Kempton.

"Mother, mother, we do think! We are doing our Master's work! No harm can come to us," said Mary Kempton, as she took down her cloak and bonnet to put them on.

"Sit down to the table there, Judy, in the seat nearest the fire. Eat and drink and warm yourself, while I fill some baskets to take with us," said Rachel. "Mrs. Kempton, will you please give Judy some tea and muffins?"

The poor, famishing and freezing creature accepted the hospitality offered her, and Mrs. Kempton attended to her wants, while Rachel Wood busied herself with filling two baskets.

Into one basket she put tea and sugar, and bread and butter, and a little bottle of milk. And this basket she gave to Mary Kempton to carry.

Into the other and larger basket she packed coals and kindling wood. And this she meant to carry.

Finally she took a warm blanket off her own bed, and rolled it up and tied it, and laid it down, intending to ask Judy to carry that.

And by this time the half-frozen and half-famished girl having been warmed and fed, they all prepared to set out and brave the storm.

"And where is the child that was living with them?" inquired Rachel Wood, who, ever since the entrance of Judy Maloney with her message of woe, had been thinking more of little Benny than of any one else.

"The child? What, the child as stayed to take care of 'em when kind friends, Mrs. Kempton herself there to the fore, would a perwided for him comfortable, if

only he would a-left 'em, which he wouldn't? The child has begged and lied and stole for 'em, to keep 'em from starving and freezing and dying? Why, do you think as if the child had been living they'd a-been brought to this?" bitterly inquired Judy.

"'If the child had been living,' did you say? Did you say that? Oh, poor little Benny! Dead! Well, it is best! Yes, indeed, it is best! I thank Heaven, little Benny is dead—dead in his ignorant, irresponsible childhood! I thank Heaven!" exclaimed Rachel Wood, earnestly.

"Who said he was dead? He is not dead: that is, not quite. But he might's well be; he might's well be. He's down with pleurisy and 'flamatory rheumatism and what not! If he hadn't been down, them as he pertected and perwided for would never a-been fetched to this ere pass!" said the girl, bitterly.

They were now leaving the room. Rachel Wood turned to Mary's mother, and said:

"It looks rude in me to go off, and leave a visitor, Mrs. Kempton; but, under these circumstances, you'll forgive me, I know."

"Why, in course I will—in course I will, my child. Oh, Rachel, don't say a word more! My only consarn is, whether you and Mary won't catch your death o' cold, a-going out in sich orful weather as this."

"No one ever came to harm through doing their duty, although it sometimes seems as if they did," murmured Rachel.

"Well, child, I'll stop here a minute and wash up the tea things, and tidy up your room a bit, and make the fire safe; and then I'll lock the door, and take the key with me, and you can call for it when you come back, Rachel. And you needn't be afeared of disturbing me, Rachel. So you can rap at my room door, and get your key at any time you come back and want it, if it's in the middle of the night, or near morning or any time. And, besides, you know, I shall be anxious to know about that there gal and her child," said Mrs. Kempton, following the three girls to the door.

"Thank you kindly, neighbor. If we can do any good

by staying there, we sha'n't come home till morning. So don't sit up or lie awake for us. Good-night," said Rachel Wood.

"Good-night, and Heaven have a care of you, girls!" prayed Mary's mother, as she shut the door behind them.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BEGGAR'S DEATHBED.

The three girls, with their bundle and baskets, passed out into the black darkness of the night, and at once faced a furious storm of wind, snow and sleet.

Huddling their wraps around them as well as they could, and tucking their faces down upon their chests, to save them from the cutting, stinging sleet, they hurried on in single file down Junk lane, and out into Ship alley, and down the alley to Low street, where, at the corner, a solitary gas lamp shed a little, perplexing light on their dismal way.

At the upper end of the street they saw the gas lamps of the Strand shining redly and dimly through the storm.

They turned their backs on these lights, and hurried down the street toward the river, until they came to a narrow, dilapidated gateway, where one miserable light was flickering.

They passed this gateway, and entered the wretched yard known as "Wellesley Court." Famine Court, Filth Court, Fever Court, had been more appropriate names.

Fortunately it was night, and the eye was spared the sight of turbid gutters, festering rags, decaying vegetables, garbage, offal, and all the fever-breeding horrors of the place, as well as of the sin-ruined famine and fever-stricken wrecks of humanity that in the daytime crowd the yard, but in the night time go forth like foul nightbirds seeking their prey, or else creep into these dens to sleep and forget.

Judy Malony led her companions across the yard, which was but very dimly lighted by the gas jet over the gateway, and a few household tapers shining here and there from dilapidated windows; and she took them to a house opposite the gateway, and pushed open a door that at once admitted them to a room more utterly wretched in its destitution and squalor than anything even they had yet seen.

But at first they could not see it well.

The room was obscurely lighted by a poor substitute for a taper—a piece of rag burning in a saucer of very dirty and offensive grease, that filled the place with a stifling vapor.

Besides this there was no light and there was no fire. All was nearly dark and intensely cold. And all was silent as well, except for a very weak and piteous wail that seemed to come from the corner of the room, and an occasional moan from the dimly visible bed.

"I am glad you reminded me to bring a candle and matches, Judy," said Rachel Wood, as she took from her basket a "penny dip" and lighted it, and set it on a tin candlestick that she had also provided.

Then she looked around.

Oh, then so much misery met her sight at once that she became perplexed and confounded, not knowing where first to turn, where first to offer help.

On a wretched cot in one corner lay Rosy Flowers, covered over with the remains of a tattered old patchwork quilt. Her form was emaciated till it seemed a mere skeleton with the skin stretched tightly over it. Her eyes, deeply sunken and bright with the fever of famine, were turned eagerly toward her visitors. Her lips, parched with thirst, opened as if to speak, but her voice died away in husky murmurs.

On a fragment of ragged and dirty carpeting in an opposite corner of the room, lay little Benny—his form wasted to skin and bone, his face flushed, his hair tangled, his head rolling in the restless delirium of low fever.

On a stool before the fireless hearth sat old Granny Flowers, croning to herself in the imbelicity of dotage,

and holding her withered hands over a few scraps of old shoe leather, flannel rags, strings, etc., which were smoking, and which she fondly persuaded herself were going to burn.

But in an old lidless hair trunk, on a pile of rags, in which it was half buried, lay the most pitiable sight of all—a babe of a few days old, unwashed, untended, festering in dirt and perishing of hunger. Reader, I saw all this with my own eyes, and "not another's."

Rachel Wood clapped her hands to her head in utter bewilderment for a moment, but rallied herself instantly, and after telling Mary Kempton to make up the fire from the fuel she had bought, and to hang on the kettle of water, she went up to the side of the dying girl, and, speaking very gently, she said:

"Dear Rose, I am sorry to find you in this way."

The girl's feverish eyes brightened still more, as she huskily answered:

"Oh, I am so glad to see you! I thank you so much for coming! It was so good in you to come to see poor me."

"Rose, I would have come before, if I had known you were sick and in need. I came as soon as I found it out, Rose."

"Yes, I know. Thank—thank—thank you, Rachel."

"You speak with difficulty, poor Rose. Do not try to talk."

"I haven't—tasted—food—these five—long days," faltered the faint voice of the girl, while her feverish eyes were fixed with a hungry glare upon the face of Rachel.

"Oh, Rosy! what a sin and a shame in a Christian city! But you shall have some tea and some toast in five minutes, dear," said Rachel, hurrying to the fireplace, where Mary Kempton had already kindled a fire and set over it a tin cup of water to boil, for in that miserable abode there was no tea-kettle.

The old woman had moved her stool into a corner, where she sat muttering to herself in an utterly childish and imbecile manner.

Rachel went zealously to work to help to prepare food and drink for the starving girl.

She hunted up a small pitcher without a handle, which she made to do duty as a teapot.

Then, upon further search, she found a cracked cup and saucer, and the half of a large dish.

"We must make these do for to-night, Mary. To-morrow morning I will step over home and bring what it most wanted," said Rachel.

And the two girls soon got ready a very good cup of tea and a delicate round of milk toast, which they carried to the sufferer.

Mary Kempton got up on the bed behind Rose, and lifted and supported her in a sitting position, while Rachel Wood set the tea and toast on the bed before her, and began to feed the invalid.

But, oh! the poor girl could scarcely swallow the tea, given her even as it was, in small teaspoonfuls at a time.

And when, with the eagerness of famine, she snatched and tried to swallow a morsel of the soft milk toast, she choked, grew sick and motioned for them to take it all away and to lay her down again.

"It is too late," she panted, faintly—"too late!—I thought—I could eat—and drink—so much—but I can't. I can't—can't swallow; and, if I could, it would sicken me—too late!"

"Oh, if we only had a little brandy or wine! But all the places are shut up now!" said Rachel, as she removed the almost untouched tea and toast.

"Give it to me, then. I can eat it. I'm hungry, I tell you. But none of you don't care nothing about me. No, when one's old, nobody cares for 'em!" grumbled Granny Flowers, holding out her withered hands for the food.

Rachel gave it to her, and the old creature returned to her stool and sat down, and began to eat and drink ravenously.

At this moment the miserable babe in the box awoke and began to cry with hunger or pain, or both.

"Oh, take it, Rachel! Oh, feed it! I have nothing for it!" moaned Rose, from the bed.

And Rachel moved to do her bidding, but Mary Kempton interrupted her, saying:

"Let me do this, Rachel. The miserable little creature wants washing and dressing as well as feeding, and I, who have helped to nurse so many little baby brothers and sisters, know a deal more about it than you do. You go and look at Benny. He is very ill, too. Listen to him!"

Rachel Wood very willingly turned her attention to Benny, who just at this moment had begun to roll his head again and to mutter.

"Never you mind, Rosy—Get well soon, and go out for you again—Bless you, I'm not ill—When I get a big man—crack a big crib—The crown? Yes, sir—That lady there—that love-er-ly, love-er-ly lady there ——" murmured the child, in his delirious dream.

Rachel went to him and felt his head. It was like burning coals. She took her own handkerchief from her pocket and wet it in cold water, and laid it on his forehead.

Then he opened his eyes, and looked at her.

"Do you know me, Benny?" she kindly inquired.

"Yes; what's them you've got on your head?" he asked, looking wistfully at her.

"I have nothing on my head, child," she answered, putting her hands up to feel and make sure—"nothing at all on my head, Benny."

"Oh, yes, you have! I see now. It's my wreath of roses. It ain't for you. It's for—it's for—that love-er-ly lady——"

Rachel saw that he was still delirious. She shifted him into a somewhat easier position on his poor, ragged rug, and then wet the handkerchief on his head again, and sat by him until he fell into a disturbed sleep.

Meanwhile Mary Kempton, with the help of Judith Malony, had washed the baby and fed it.

Then the dying girl beckoned Rachel Wood to come to her. And when Rachel had seated herself at the

bedside, Rose, with feeble and failing fingers, unloosened from her own neck a narrow black ribbon, to which was attached a very slender gold ring.

"There, Rachel," she panted, faintly, "I have kept that through all—when I was starving—when I was freezing—I have kept it through all; I wouldn't sell it, or even pawn it, Rachel. I have kept it through all."

"But what about it, Rose?" inquired Rachel, looking curiously at the ring, which was but a poor little thread-like circle of gold, worth at most half a crown.

"Why, don't you see what it is?—My treasure, my jewel, my honor, Rachel Wood! My wedding ring!"

She had spoken with great excitement and false strength, and now she fell back panting on her pillow.

"Oh, Rose, I am so glad you have a wedding ring, my child. So very glad and thankful! All the rest is as nothing now!" exclaimed Rachel, as the tears of joy filled her eyes.

The dying girl smiled on her, and with an effort said:

"You are—so glad. I was not as bad as you thought."

"So glad, for your sake. So glad for your child's," answered Rachel. And then she added:

"Now, Rose, you must tell me who gave you this wedding ring."

"No, I must not tell you that. It is a dead—dead secret. I promised him never, never to tell without his consent. And I cannot—break a promise—on my deathbed—you know," panted the dying girl.

"Where is he? He would surely release you from your promise, Rose?"

"I don't know—where he is. I wish I did. I have not seen—nor heard of him—in many——" answered the girl, panting so hard that Rachel saw at once that this conversation was shaking out the few remaining sands in her glass of life.

"You must not talk any more now, Rose. Lie still and try to go to sleep. To-morrow morning, as soon as the shops are open, I will get you some brandy," said Rachel.

And Rose obeyed her by lying still, but whether she really slept, or only rested, no one could tell.

Rachel went over to Judy, and questioned her.

"Have the parish done anything at all for the old woman, or the girl, or the child?"

"No, 'cause the old 'oman wouldn't go inter the Union. No more would Rosy. As for Benny, they claimed him, did Rosy and the old un, for their own. And they wouldn't part with him nuther. And I'm not a-blaming of 'em. Anythink better'n the Union. Ask anybody as has been there," bitterly answered the girl.

"Hush! Our talk disturbs the poor boy," said Rachel. And indeed little Benny was now rolling his head and raving in high delirium.

Rachel went to him and wet his head, and tried to soothe him, but without success. He continued to toss and rave. His ravings disturbed poor Rose, who groaned, and began to breathe in that distressing manner peculiar to some dying persons.

Meanwhile the old woman was crying and rocking her body to and fro.

And in the midst of all this, the wretched babe awoke and set up a piteous wail.

Judy took it in her arms, and walked it up and down the squalid floor, but could not quiet it.

And so, with the delirious tossing and raving of little Benny, the hard breathing of the dying girl, the wailing of the suffering infant, the imbecile murmuring of the old woman within, and the howling of the wind and the rattling of the sleet without, the hideous night went on.

"Oh, what a woeful hour! Oh, that it were morning!" signed Rachel Wood, fervently.

"And, oh, what a lesson to us all!" answered Mary Kempton. "Only this evening my head was all but turned with the sight of my mistress' ball dress and jewels, and the thought of the grand ball at the Duchess of Cheviot's, so that I talked and rattled away about those vanities as if there was not a pain or a duty left in life. And now look here—Rachel, what o'clock is it, do you think?"

"I heard St. Giles' strike nine a little while ago."

"Nine o'clock, and Mrs. Melliss is now dressing for the ball at the Duchess of Cheviot's. Think of that, and think of this, good angels in heaven!"

Rachel Wood sat down beside little Benny with a cup of water in her hand, to bathe his head.

And now behold the contrast!

It is nine o'clock in this wretched, squalid, fever-stricken tenement in Wellesley Court; and little Benny, the eldest, the unowned, unknown son of the Duke and Duchess of Cheviot, is lying ill of a fever brought on by starvation and exposure. He is half clothed in dirty rags, and tossing about on the almost bare floor, scantily covered with a piece of old, filthy carpeting.

It was nine o'clock in Cheviot House, in Piccadilly. The select dinner party that was to precede the ball of the evening is just over. The dessert is placed upon the table; and the children, as is the custom in that house of close domestic love and union, are brought in for a few moments to partake moderately of the fruits and ices, and to be caressed and admired before being dismissed to their beds. There is the little Earl of Wellrose, and with him the little ladies Jessie, Clemence, Hester, and Eva Douglas. And they are all petted and praised by the guests, and all their little sayings and doings are duly approved and applauded.

Suddenly little Lady Jessie Douglas speaks out:

"Mamma, dear, do you remember that pretty little beggar boy, that we called in and gave the cake to, on Twelfth-night?"

"Yes, love. What puts him in your head now?" inquired the duchess.

"I do not know, mamma, dear, unless it is this piece of cake. But, oh, was he not the very image of my brother Wellrose?"

This childish chat of the little Lady Jessie necessitates an explanation of her "Twelfth-night freak," as it was always called in the family.

And to the great amusement of the dinner guests, the story of her little ladyship's whim of having the beggar boy brought in from the street, that she might give

him her slice of the Twelfth-day cake, and of his good fortune in finding the ring, and the absurdity of his being crowned king, and the strangeness of his conduct in passing over his little benefactress, Lady Jessie, and all the other little ladies, and choosing the Duchess of Cheviot for his queen, and finally of his ignominiously breaking down and crying and having to be sent away.

When the guests have sufficiently enjoyed this story, and rallied the little beauty on her caprices, the children are all kissed and dismissed.

At this very moment, little Benny, tossing in fever and delirium on his miserable pallet in the squalid tenement-house in Wellesley Court, raves out:

"No; not for you—not for you, little girl, if you did give me the slice of cake! It is for that love-er-ly lady! Don't cry, Rosy. I ain't hungry! deed I ain't—not much—you take and eat it, Rosy! When I get a big man—crack a crib, you know. And—and—— No, not cold—'deed I an't, granny!—You take the carpet—poor granny!—When I get a big man——"

And so he maundered on in his frenzy, until he gradually sank into stupor.

This most miserable night passed at last.

With the earliest dawn of day Rachel Wood, leaving the sufferers as I have described them, took a basket and went out.

She found that the storm had passed away with the night. Of this she felt so glad, that she even hoped much of the hideous misery she had witnessed might also melt away before the night of the coming day. She repeated to herself:

" 'Sorrow lasteth but a night, and joy cometh with the morning.' "

She went forth from that filthy courtyard and walked on up Low street until she reached the Strand. And there she entered the first wine store she found open, and bought a small bottle of brandy.

She then retraced her steps and went down Low street, up Ship alley and into Junk lane.

The sun was just rising and breaking through the

low clouds along the eastern horizon, as she reached the old tenement-house where she lived.

The denizens of the house were but just stirring.

She passed the pawnbroker's shop, and opened the door of the old-clothes store.

Mrs. Kempton was already there, arranging her unsavory wares.

"Come for your key, Rachel? Here it is. And how is the poor girl?" inquired Mrs. Kempton.

Rachel described the condition of Rose Flowers and of the other wretched inmates of the shed in Wellesley Court and then added:

"You must not think an ill thought of poor Rose any more, Mrs. Kempton. She was married."

"Now you don't say so! Who married of her?" inquired the poor woman.

"I don't know. Some unprincipled man, I suppose, of a higher rank than herself, who was ashamed to own her, and has now deserted her. But, womanlike, she is so loyal to him that she will not give up his name."

"Well, I do think girls is sich fools!" observed Mrs. Kempton.

"Well, now, I'll take my key, if you please, and go up to my room. I wish to procure some necessaries to take to Rose, and then I shall stay with her until all is over."

"Then you really think as she'll die?"

"She has been dying all night. She may be dead when I get back," answered Rachel, gravely.

"Well, here, take your key, Rachel. You're a good girl. I'll say it, and stand to it."

"I don't know about that, Mrs. Kempton."

"I do, then. But, Rachel, tell my Mary as I'd be willing enough to let her stay 'long o' that poor girl today if it was left to me; but she must think of her missus, and keeping of her place, and she must go right straight back to Charles street early this morning to wait on her missus at her t'ilet."

"She is going back as soon as I return to take her place in that house of death, Mrs. Kempton. And you

need not be anxious. Mrs. Melliss is a kind mistress, and, besides, she will sleep late this morning after the ball; so that she will not ring for her maid before Mary gets back."

And, saying these words, Rachel Wood took up her basket and her key and went up to her room.

Here, from her own slender stores, she filled her basket with all she thought most needed in that house, where all the necessaries of life were lacking.

Among the rest, she put in a complete change of clean clothes for Rose Flowers, and also an old sheet and a flannel skirt, with which she meant to make something to dress the baby.

Then, well laden, she left her house and hurried back to the shed in Wellesley Court.

She found all there very much as she had left them.

"Little Benny has been sleeping heavily ever since you left. The babe has been quiet, too, ever since I fed it and put it to sleep. But as for Rosy, I think she is sinking fast," was the report made by Mary Kempton on the return of Rachel Wood.

Rachel went to the bedside of the girl, and found the words of her friend true.

The ashen shades of death were creeping over the still, pale, young face that lay before her. As Rachel gazed upon her, Rose opened her eyes and smiled faintly, but did not speak.

Rachel poured out a little brandy into a cup and gave her a teaspoonful of it.

Rose seemed temporarily revived.

And then Rachel asked her how she felt.

"I am going fast, dear friend. Stoop down—I want to ask you something," said the poor creature, in a faint voice.

Rachel put her ear down to the feeble lips, when Rose murmured:

"The old woman will not last many days. Then they'll send my baby to the workhouse. Will you go there sometimes to see him?"

"Rose," said Rachel, sweetly and solemnly, "have no anxiety about your baby. I will adopt him, and bring

him up as my own son. I shall never marry. Sickly people never should. But I want something to love. And I will take your child, if you will leave him to me."

"If I will! Oh, Rachel, Rachel! Bless you! bless you!" exclaimed the poor girl, starting up to catch and kiss the hands of the seamstress.

But her false strength failed and she fell back, fainting.

Greatly shocked, Rachel administered another teaspoonful of brandy, and then ordered and enforced perfect quiet for the sufferer.

Mary Kempton next took leave of Rachel softly, and without disturbing Rose, and with a promise to return and sit up that night, if her mistress would permit her, she left the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BALLET GIRL'S FATE.

Rachel Wood and Judy Malony were thus left to watch the four equally helpless creatures—the dying girl, the delirious child, the new-born babe and the imbecile old woman.

The dying girl lay sleeping heavily, and sometimes waking and breathing hard, or rather making that indescribable and most distressing sound peculiar to some persons in a long-protracted death struggle.

All that Rachel could do for her was to give her occasionally a teaspoonful of beef tea, or a few drops of brandy, so as to sustain life a little longer.

The child Benny lay in a stupor, broken at intervals by spasmodic starts, moans and delirium.

The only relief Rachel could give him was to apply cloths wet with ice water to his burning head.

The babe slept as new-born babes usually do, waking only to cry and be fed, and to fall asleep again.

The old woman sat in the chimney corner grumbling

and crooning to herself, half conscious of the trouble around her, and wholly unable to assist in its relief.

Rachel Wood, in the intervals of her attendance upon the ill and the dying, found time to cut up the old linen sheet and the old flannel skirt that she had brought, and to shape them into baby clothes, which she and Judy began to sew.

Quite early in the forenoon the parish doctor made his appearance.

He looked at poor Rose, and said that she was sinking fast, but that the struggle was not painful. He then wrote a prescription for a sedative to soothe her mortal agony.

Next he examined the sick boy, said that he was very ill, and must be sent to the Middlesex Hospital. But meanwhile he wrote a prescription for a febrifuge to cool and lower his fever.

He gave Rachel Wood an order to procure these medicines from the free dispensary attached to the Middlesex Hospital.

And then he promised to look in again at night, and took his leave.

Rachel Wood sent Judy Malony with the order and the two prescriptions to get the medicines from the dispensary, and then sat down to sew while watching her patients.

As she sat and sewed she was a little startled by hearing the voice of Rose, speaking clearer than she had heard it yet, and saying:

"Rachel, dear, are you quite alone?"

"No, dear," answered Rachel, rising quickly and going to the bedside. "Besides you and the baby, there is granny in the chimney corner."

"Granny and the baby are equally harmless. Is there no one else?"

"No one else, dear," answered Rachel, wondering at the sudden strength that had come to the dying girl, but drawing no hopeful augury from it.

"Come here, then, Rachel. I must speak to you alone while I can."

Rachel drew nearer still.

Rachel you will keep my poor child?" inquired Rose.

"Yes, dear. I told you so. I will keep him, and, Heaven sparing me and him, I will bring him up to be a good and useful man."

"Bless you, bless you, bless you, dear Rachel!" slowly and fervently repeated Rosy. "You have got my wedding ring, Rachel?" she then inquired.

"Yes, dear. Here it is. Do you want it?"

"No. Keep it to show my boy, so he may know his mother was married, though he may never know who his father was. But stop. Let me take it in my hand once more, Rachel."

Rachel Wood drew a small paper parcel from her pocket, unrolled it and took out the slender gold ring, still attached to the narrow black ribbon. She put it in Rosy's hand.

The poor girl, without untying it from its ribbon, slipped it on her wasted finger, looked at it fondly, smiled on it, kissed it, and then drew it off again, and handed it back to her friend, saying:

"Take it, dear. Keep it safely. Show it to my boy when he is old enough to understand, so he may know his mother was honest, though his father may be lost."

"Rosy, oh, my poor Rosy," said Rachel, as she took the ring and wrapped it up and replaced it in her pocket—"my dear girl, though you are bound by your promise not to give up the name of that man——"

"I do not believe I really know his true name. I have every reason to believe that he courted me and married me under a false name. But even that false name I must not divulge," said the poor girl.

"Well, though you must not do that, yet are you not free to tell me enough to afford me some clew by which, at some time, I may be able to trace this man for his child's sake?" pleaded Rachel.

"I don't know. But this much I think I can tell you——"

"Take a cup of beef tea and a teaspoonful of brandy first, dear, and that will give you strength to go on," said Rachel.

And she administered both restoratives and then sat down again by the bedside.

"It was at the theatre it all began. He saw me dance. He asked the manager to take him behind the scenes and introduce him to me. The manager of the Thespian never cared a pinch of snuff for the morals of us poor ballet girls. So he brought this gentleman to the green-room and introduced him to me as a Mr. ——, a very common name, that I seemed to know at once did not belong to that aristocratic-looking man."

"And yet it might," said Rachel, smiling sadly at the romantic fancy of the poor girl, who had seen, in some Smith or Jones, a Howard or a Cavendish.

"He followed me up from that night. He made me presents and gave me treats. He used to take me, and any favorite companions I might like to select, to little dinners and suppers at Richmond and other places."

Rosy paused for breath. Rachel sighed. It was the old, old beaten road to ruin! Rosy resumed:

"One night, after the performance was over, he called for me in a carriage at the stage door, and invited me to go with him to a little supper. Somehow, though I had grown to love him, I never liked to go anywhere with him alone. So I told him I would like to go if he would let me ask Flora May, one of my companions, to go with me, which he did. He took us to a lovely little villa in St. John's Wood. It was a moonlight night, so we could see the outside of the villa and the grounds. And oh! it was beautiful!"

"A white sepulcher!" sadly observed Rachel.

"Ah! but it was lovely outside and inside both! When we went in we found a splendid little drawing-room and dining room; connected by sliding doors, on one side of the hall, and a pretty bedchamber and dressing-room also communicating, on the other side of the hall; and there was a conservatory, and an aviary, and a flower garden."

"Dante clothed the gate of hell with terrors. He should rather have wreathed it with flowers! It would have been truer to truth," put in Rachel, while Rosy paused to rest. At length the dying girl resumed.

"We took off our hats in the pretty bedroom, and then we went into the splendid little drawing-room, and were scarcely seated when the sliding doors were withdrawn, and we were invited into the elegant little dining-room, where a delicious little supper was spread. Oh, dear, we ate of the most delicious food and drank of the richest wines. Ah, dear, I have hungered and thirsted, starved and froze enough since to make up for all that luxury and splendor!"

"Poor child! Rest a while, and then go on," said Rachel, compassionately, as she passed her hand over the jetty locks of the girl.

"The wine got into my head," she resumed, "and I talked and laughed a great deal. I was perfectly charmed and carried away with the beauty and splendor of the miniature villa, and said so. So, after supper he took me into the conservatory to show me the flowers. Flora May stayed behind, on purpose, as I really do believe. And there, having me all alone to himself, he told me how he loved me, and told me that this elegant villa might be my own if I would come and live in it."

"Ay, ay," said Rachel, bitterly; "the old temptation of the devil: 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' But go on, dear."

"The wine had not got so much into my head as to make me forget my resolution. I told him no, and no, and no, and I broke away from him and ran back into the drawing-room, where Flora May was sitting, looking over a book of 'The Beauties of Charles the Second's Court.' And then we went and put on our bonnets to go home."

"And afterward?" inquired Rachel.

"Of course, I ought afterward to have cut his acquaintance, but I didn't. I liked suppers and dinners, and treats and presents too well for that. But I would not leave my grandparents' poor, miserable home and go and live in his beautiful villa, until he married me, which at length he did."

The fast-failing girl paused for a few minutes, and then resumed:

"I do believe he was madly in love with me just about that time, else he never would have done what he did. But you know, Rachel, I was said to be pretty then."

"Very pretty, my poor Rose."

"Ah, yes! but the beauty that might have been my blessing has proved my curse. Ah, well, he was madly in love with this poor beauty, as I said," sighed Rosy. And then she relapsed into a silence so long that Rachel, who had good reasons for wishing to know the whole truth of this mourful affair, ventured to recall her attention by inquiring:

"And about the marriage, Rosy?"

"Oh, yes!" she said, rousing herself. "It was at Greenwich, after a white bait dinner. We kept it up all night. Instead of going home and going to bed in the morning, he stayed up and sent for a special license and a parson, and married me there in the presence of two friends as witnesses. And then he took me to the elegant villa. And I lived in splendor, pleasure and luxury, a fool's paradise, for four months."

"A fool's paradise, indeed!" sighed Rachel.

Then one day he was missing. And days passed and he did not come back. And I was first uneasy, and then anxious, and then desperate. Tradesmen's bills came in, and I had no money to meet them. Two quarters' rent was due, and I had no funds to pay. The house had been rented furnished. So not only did that make the rent double, but it also left no property to satisfy the landlord's claims except my personal effects, which were all seized. And so one day I found myself in the street homeless and penniless."

"Poor child! If you had only had the courage of the prodigal son, to come home!"

"If I had! But I hadn't! I was afraid of facing my grandfather. I heard afterward how my elopement had killed him. But then I did not know it, for I should not have been afraid to face my poor old grandmother. Well, Rachel, you may guess what followed. I was driven from one wretched lodging house to another, while I had a rag of clothes left to sell to pay my

lodging. And then at last, came that awful night when I was turned out of my last miserable shelter, with only clothing enough to cover my body!"

"That was terrible!"

"Yes. Some one has written of just such poor, lost creatures as I:

"The Street said, 'Sin to live;'
And the River said, 'Sin to die.'"

It is true, Rachel! If I had minded what the street said, I might still have lived in sinful luxury and lost my soul. For, you see, there were some of his old company keepers met me sometimes. I would not follow the counsel of the street. I thought I was less wicked to yield to the river. And so, that desperate night, I was about to throw myself into it, when I was prevented by my old grandmother, bless her!"

"Oh! how I thank Heaven that you were saved from such a fearful, fatal deed, Rosy!" said Rachel, shuddering.

"So do I. For, Rachel, since I returned home here, I have thought over my past sins and follies; and I have bitterly, profoundly repented them. But, oh! Rachel, of all the sins I ever committed, my sins against that poor boy there trouble me the most!"

"Against Benny?"

"Ay, against him—the little angel soul!"

"Why, I can hardly believe you. What have you done to Benny?"

"I let him beg for me. That was not so bad, perhaps. But I let him steal for me! And when he brought me a loaf of bread he had 'hooked' from a baker, or a parcel of tea he had stolen from a grocer's counter, or an orange or a cucumber from the market, I hugged and kissed him, and praised and petted him, and made believe he was such a good boy, and had done so well! And, oh! to think that he is now down with the fever, and out of his head, and I cannot say to him, 'Benny, I was a hungry, thirsty, wicked woman! I was a longing, selfish woman, and I told you what wasn't true!'

Oh, Rachel, the worst sting of sin is the thought that we cannot undo the wrong we have done!"

"But Christ can undo it," said Rachel, reverently.

"Yes, He! He can do all things. He who pardoned the Magdalen at His feet—He who pardoned the thief on the cross, He can cleanse my soul of its sins, and undo all my wrongdoings. Beloved and blessed be His name forever," said Rose, in a meek and fervent tone.

Then she lay some time, as if much exhausted.

Presently she said:

"Bring my poor babe to me, Rachel, dear; I would like to see him and kiss him once more."

Rachel tenderly lifted the sleeping babe and brought him to his dying mother.

Rose attempted to take him in her arms, but her strength was gone. She sighed and let her arms fall.

Then Rachel held the babe very close to his mother's face. And Rose kissed him and patted his cheeks. And the babe waked and opened his eyes, and looked at her.

"How clean and comfortable he is! That is your doing, dear Rachel," she murmured.

"Mrs. Kempton lent me a suit of baby linen for present use. And I am making some up now for future occasions," answered Rachel.

"Bless you, dear! Bless you!" murmured Rose.

Then she kissed her child again, murmured a prayer for him, and let Rachel take him back to his cradle.

"I trust my orphan child to Him who blessed little children. I trust my sinful soul to Him who pardoned the Magdalen and the thief. Good-night, dear Rachel; I am going to sleep."

These were the last words of the poor ballet dancer, She turned her face to the wall and closed her eyes, as if in slumber.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DESTROYER'S VISIT.

The short winter afternoon was closing in.

Rachel kept the room very quiet, that the sleeper might not be disturbed.

Presently Judy Malony returned in a bustle of indignation against the officers of the dispensary.

"Sure, and I couldn't get back any suner," she said. "Bedad, and the place was that full of poor craytures all after physic, as you'd thought the chollery had broken out, and aich one was worse than the other wid it. And sure I lifted up my voice and screamed out to the man behind the counter that the girl and the boy were kilt intirely for the want ov the physic I'd come for. Divil a bit would he mind me! And divil a bit would the other spalpeens make way for me! And so, bedad, and I had to wait my turn before ever I could get the physic. But here it is at last, me darlint!" said Judy, triumphantly, producing the medicine.

And she would have gone on talking in her excited manner, if Rachel had not warned her to keep quiet and not disturb the sleepers.

"Rose is sleeping more peacefully than she has done since I have been here," added Rachel.

So she lighted a tallow candle and sat it on the mantel-shelf, behind an old jug for a shade.

And then she and Judy sat down to wait the arrival of the doctor.

He soon came, and inquired of Rachel whether she had administered the medicines to the patients.

"I have almost just got the medicines. And they are both sleping so quietly now that I thought I would not disturb them."

"You were quite right," said the doctor, as he went up to the bedside to examine the girl.

He took up her hand very gently, so as to feel her

pulse, if possible, without waking her. He dropped her hand almost instantly.

"Why, the girl is dead!" he said.

"Dead!" echoed Rachel, shocked, even though she had been all day long expecting this death.

"Dead! Och hone! Och hone!" wailed Judy Malony.

"Who's dead now? Stop your howling, can't you? You Irish always 'wake' the dead. And faith, wake them you would, if the dead could be waked at all!" growled the old woman, only half-roused to a consciousness of what was going on, and then relapsing into imbecility again.

"This girl has been dead for at least half an hour," said the doctor, after having made a further examination of the body.

Rachel Wood quietly approached the bedside, tenderly turned the body over on its back, and reverently closed the dead eyes, holding her fingers on the lids to keep them down.

"I will notify the proper officer to send the parish undertaker here to attend to the funeral. To-morrow morning the sick child will be removed to the hospital, and the old woman to the Union. Meanwhile, give the child the medicine as directed," said the doctor, as he took leave.

The girls remained a few minutes longer standing silently by the bedside. Then Rachel Wood said:

"Light another candle, Judy. We must have light enough to see to do our duty by this poor clay. And set a chair with a shawl over its back, to keep the light from hurting Benny's head."

The Irish girl silently obeyed all these directions.

"Now, Judy, help me to draw this bedstead out into the middle of the floor, so that we can get around it to lay out the body," added Rachel Wood.

And they drew the bedstead into the middle of the room, and then in silence began their solemn work.

The room was very still.

The old woman in the chimney corner had fallen asleep, with her head dropped upon her chest.

Benny had ceased his moans, and lay in a deep comatose state.

Even the babe was perfectly quiet.

The court outside was unusually still.

Its inhabitants could not have known what had occurred in this house, yet it seemed as if even the unknown presence of Death had been felt by them, and stilled their usual turbulence.

But while the two girls were busy with their mournful work, the decent quietness of the court was broken by ribald songs and laughter, by irregular fotsteps, and by a young man's voice saying to the singer:

"Stow that, Sidney. I'm blest if you won't have the police on us."

"You talk of police! And rebuke—hic!—a gentleman for amusing himself in his own way! I'm an officer and a gentleman—hic!—and I want to know what the deuce you have brought me into this blamed place for?"

"Why? Why, I've just got wind that a fugitive little friend of mine lives somewhere hereabout. Jove! I must have been very drunk that day I married her! I haven't seen the little puss since that morning I had to cut and run without saying good-by. Ever since I came back I have been looking her up, and only to-night I got news that she was living hereabout. Oh, I say! here's a light in this house. Let's go in and inquire."

The two girls engaged in laying out the dead body had just heard this much when the door was pushed rudely open, and two reeling men entered.

"Can you tell me——" began the younger, when suddenly his eyes fell upon the half-undressed, emaciated corpse of his once beautiful young victim, as it lay on the poor bed under the hands of its dressers.

He started back, turned deadly pale, glared for an instant at the vision, and then threw his hands to his head, and, with a low cry of horror, rushed from the room. His companion sobered by the sight he had seen, hurried out to look after him.

All this had transpired without a word spoken between the parties in the room.

But Rachel Wood had noted both the men, and felt sure that she should always be able to recognize either of them.

"Faix! and that was very queer itself!" whispered Judy, cautiously, breaking the solemn silence.

"It was strange," admitted Rachel.

"And sure I'm thinking they were both beastly drunk."

"They were neither of them quite sober."

"Will I fasten the door to perwent any other spalpeens from coming in to mislest us?"

"Yes," whispered Rachel Wood.

And Judy was about to lock the door, when it was gently pushed open in her face, and Mary Kempton entered with a heavy basket on her arm.

"I could not come before. Mrs. Melliss slept late in the day, and—— Oh! good gracious me alive! is she really gone, then?" exclaimed Mary Kempton, cutting short her explanations as her eyes fell upon the figure of the dead girl.

"She died at seven this evening," gravely replied Rachel Wood.

Mary Kempton put down the basket and seated herself on the solitary chair the poor room possessed, and she remained silent for a few moments, and then said:

"I am too late with these things. I'm sorry, but I could not help it; and, after all, maybe she could not have taken them. But Mrs. Melliss came home very early this morning from the duchess' ball, and went immediately to bed, and slept until late, so that I did not see her until near four o'clock this afternoon. And then she had to have her tea, and then to dress for dinner, which brought it up to near six o'clock before I felt free to tell her about poor Rosy Flowers. And then she had to send for the housekeeper and order all these wines and jellies and things to be packed up, to send by me, so it was seven o'clock before I got off."

"Do not distress yourself, Mary. She could not have taken anything you brought, even if you had got here at noon," said Rachel.

"And, oh, tell me! Did she die like a heathen? or did she—did she——"

And Mary Kempton broke down and wept.

"Do not weep for her, dear Mary. She was not the great sinner we supposed. She was only foolish and vain. But in poverty, illness and desertion, the Spirit of the Lord was dealing with her. She died very penitent and very hopeful," said Rachel.

"I thank Heaven for that! That is a very great relief to our minds. And now, what about this poor child —this poor little Benny? Do you think he could take a little of this jelly?

"Oh, no! Look at him! He is lying in a deep stupor. I have been waiting for him to awake, to give him his medicine. But he seems to sink deeper and deeper into stupor. And I am afraid to rouse him, lest he should fall into convulsions and die. It's a tender case to treat. But he's to be removed to the children's ward of the Middlesex Hospital to-morrow, and there he will have the best medical attention."

As Rachel Wood spoke she smoothed the sheet over the corpse, and thus finished her work there.

Then she went and sat by the pallet of little Benny, and renewed the cold water applications to his burning head.

Just at this time the old woman aroused, and said she was hungry, and began to cry like a child for something to eat.

Mary Kempton took the bread and butter and jelly from her basket, and filled a plate and put it on the poor old creature's lap.

She devoured the food greedily, and more after the manner of a starving animal than a human being.

Mary Kempton then poured out some wine and water and gave it to her.

And after that the old creature laid down on the floor before the fire and went to sleep.

Rachel Wood rolled up her shawl and put it under the gray head for a pillow.

Mary Kempton covered the withered form with her cloak.

That was the best the girls could do for Granny Flowers.

And they thought the sooner the helpless old body could be taken to the Union, the better for her.

Mournfully the night passed.

The girls, weary with the second night's watching, slept at intervals, but were frequently roused by the crying of the baby, or the delirious mutterings of little Benny.

Morning dawned at length—a bright morning for the season.

By its light they looked at little Benny, and saw that a change like the shadow of death had come over his face.

Their hearts sank with fear for the child whom they all loved, and they wished and prayed for the speedy arrival of the parish doctor.

Judy Malony put on the teakettle and prepared for a frugal breakfast for the watchers.

They had scarcely got through it when the doctor looked in, accompanied by the parish officer who was to attend to the three needful duties—the removal of the sick child to the hospital, the committal of the old woman to the Union, and the interment of the dead girl in the paupers' burial-ground.

The wretched inhabitants of the court, who had now got news of what had happened in Granny Flowers' hut, crowded around the house, and would have poured into it, had they not been kept back by the parish officer.

A litter had been brought for the removal of little Benny, and he was soon tenderly placed upon it and carried away.

A few minutes later on, the workhouse van called for Granny Flowers.

She had to be waked up from her sleep on the floor, and in a half-unconscious condition put into the van and taken away.

Then the doctor and the parish officer left the court, saying that the parish undertaker should be sent forthwith to take charge of the dead girl's burial.

Thus Rachel Wood, Mary Kempton and Judy Malony were left with the corpse and the infant.

Mary Kempton put on her cloak and bonnet, and took leave of Rachel Wood, saying:

"You know I must return to my duties at home now. But I will come again as soon as I can get leave. Where shall I find you?"

"I shall stay here and watch this poor body until they take it away. Then I shall take my child there," said Rachel, fondly, pointing to the rude cradle of her adopted baby, "and return home."

"It will be a great charge to undertake, Rachel," said Mary, gravely.

"It will be a great source of happiness to me. The smallest child is always delighted with a kitten or a bird, or anything in the shape of a pet that it can call its own, to love. In a greater degree I am deeply delighted. I, who have nothing on earth to love, am very deeply delighted to have this child."

"It is a wonder the parish officers didn't take it away to the union, when they took the old woman away."

"I told the doctor in the beginning that I would adopt the child, and bring it up as my own. I suppose he made it all right with the officers, or else he will do so; for, anyhow, they never took the slightest notice of the child, and never said a word to me about it."

"Well, good-by till I see you again. Judy will stay with you, I suppose?"

"Faix! and Judy will!" broke in the Irish girl, speaking for herself. "It's not Judy will iver turn her back on a frind in throuble!"

"And I knew that, Judy, dear. Good-by," said Mary Kempton. And she went her way.

Rachel Wood and Judy Malony stayed until the undertaker came, and brought a coffin and a cart, and took away all that remained of the poor, pretty ballet girl.

They followed the body to the paupers' burial-ground, where it was laid in its humble grave, and

where the chaplain of the workhouse read the burial service.

And then Rachel Wood took leave of Judy Malony, and folded her adopted baby to her bosom and returned home.

There a surprise awaited her, which shall be related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE NEW LODGERS.

As Rachel Wood, with the young child in her arms, entered the house in Junk lane, she passed a man who was coming out, and whom she instantly recognized as the broken-down gentleman whom she had seen with the dissipated youth on that awful night of the ballet girl's death.

Quite involuntarily she turned and gazed after him.

She saw that he was a gentleman, in spite of his shabby dress and reckless bearing.

He was rather tall, and also rather stout, but very graceful. He had light auburn hair and full beard, merry, laughing blue eyes, regular features, fair, rosy complexion, and gay, careless expression of countenance, and, as one would imagine, a frequent and jolly laugh.

The sort of man of whom it is said that "he is no one's enemy but his own;" the man that almost every one loves, and almost every one helps to ruin; the man of whom people promptly borrow money, and slowly, if ever, repay it; the man of whom people ask favors, and get them granted, too, which they would not venture to ask of any other person; the man whom all prudent, conservative men dread and avoid, unless they want to use him; and finally the man whom wife or daughter with any heart at all would love to the death, as this man's wife loved him.

All this Rachel saw or divined in that one long gaze she sent after him.

Then, wondering what could have brought such a man into that poor tenement house, she turned into the old-clothes shop, to sit down and rest before climbing the three flights of stairs that led to the floor on which her own room was situated.

She found the old-clothes woman seated, as usual, behind the counter, in a grove of dangling dresses, and engaged in needlework.

"Lor, Rachel! Come in the back room and sit down! You look just tired to death, and ready to drop under all them bundles! What on earth have you got wrapped up there?" inquired Mrs. Kempton, as she hastily got up and opened the door of the back room, and set a chair for her weary and panting visitor.

Rachel dropped into the seat; but before she could get breath to answer the woman's question, Mrs. Kempton opened her mouth again.

"And to think I couldn't get to go to the funeral, nor even to see the girl, poor thing! before she died! though little good I could have done her, to be sure, for she must a been past all that there. And so Benny is sent to the 'ospital and Granny Flowers to the Union. And the bits of bedding and stuff, which was all they had, was snapped up by the landlord for rent. Leastways that was what I heard from some o' the women. But what became of the baby? Was that sent to the Union, too?"

"Didn't Mary tell you?" inquired Rachel, in surprise.

"Save us, child! I han't seen Mary since that night as ever was when she went away long o' you to see poor Rose Flowers."

"I suppose she had not time to come to both places—here and the court, too; for she came there to bring relief to the sufferers, and I thought she might come here; but it seems she couldn't."

"Yes, child; but what has become o' the baby?" reiterated the woman.

"The baby?" said Rachel, hesitating and blushing, as if she was ashamed of the act of heavenly charity she was doing. "Oh, I have got the baby. Here he is."

And she opened the shawl and displayed the poor little waif.

"Poor, dear, lone, lorn little thing!" murmured the old-clothes woman, gazing at the infant. "But, my goodness, gracious me alive! Rachel Wood, whatever are you a-going to do with it?"

"I'm going to keep it."

"Eh?"

"To keep it, and bring it up as my own."

"What? Nonsense! Whoever heard tell on such a thing? Why, child alive! you're hardly able to keep yourself. How on earth will you ever be able to keep the baby?" inquired the dismayed woman.

"It will be a comfort and a solace to me. I am getting to be an old maid——"

"Get out, about being an old maid. You can't be more'n twenty-five year old, at most. And there's many and many a fine young man as would like to court you if you'd let him."

"But I shall never marry. I will never send down pulmonary consumption to another generation. So I should always be alone, as I have been, but for this little adopted child. And, oh, Mrs. Kempton! you have no idea what a blessing this little creature will be to my lonely life. Something to love! something to love! for which I deeply thank the Lord! As for the rest, Mrs. Kempton—as for our keep, I feel sure of that. I have the Lord's word for that," said Rachel, as she arose to go upstairs.

"Well, Rachel, you're one in a thousand, and that's a fact. And now let me take hold and help you to carry them bundles upstairs. The child is enough for you to carry."

"Oh, the babe is very light and small."

"And you're similarly thin and weak, so let me help you," persisted Mrs. Kempton, taking up the large basket, full of bundles containing baby clothes and other articles the seamstress had brought back from the court.

"Thank you very much," said Rachel.

And they went upstairs together.

When they got up to the fourth floor, Rachel was surprised to see the doors of the three other large rooms that, with her own, divided the floor, wide open and all the signs of recent occupancy within them.

"We have new neighbors here," she said, as she unlocked her own door.

"Oh, yes. Let me come in and I'll tell you all about it," answered Mrs. Kempton, following Rachel into the room and dropping into a chair.

The girl also sat down to recover her breath, after coming up all these flights of stairs.

"You see, they're none o' the kind as usually comes to this sort o' house, or neighborhood, neither, to live. They're broken-down gentry, as sure's you're born. And I'm a-thinking as he's in hiding. He calls himself Capting Sydney, though I can't find out what he's captaing of. But a rale gent he is, that's a fact, broken down though he be. And a rale lady she! And five as pretty children as ever you clapped your two good-looking eyes on! You might a-seen him. He went out just as you come in."

"Then I did see him—a tall, stout, fair-haired, pleasant-faced man?"

"Ay, that's him. An't he handsome, just?"

"Yes, but—he looks a little dissipated."

"Ay, you've hit it now. That's just it. He is a little dissipated, poor fellow! Anybody with half an eye can see that. And that's what has fetched them all down in the world, I'm thinking. And my heart does ache for his poor wife and children. She's the prettiest little creetur as ever you saw. She's not large and fair like him. She's tall and slim, with a dark skin, and coal-black eyes and coal-black hair. And the children! They are just beautiful; only, queer enough, the two boys are dark like she is, and the three little girls are fair like he."

"When did they move in?"

"The day before yesterday as ever was. They hadn't much help; so I offered to lend a hand. And she thanked me so sweetly as made me want to wait on her

all day. Well, you see, they an't got put to rights yet. And I asked her to call on me whenever she wanted anything as I could do for her—and to let me know, and I would do it cheerful. Lor', you see, they don't keep no servant. And now, I ralely must go and look after the shop, for there an't a soul there to mind it but me."

"Why, where are the children? I remember, now, I didn't see them when I was down in your room."

"The children? Why, bless you, Mary sends all on 'em to school, and pays for 'em out'n her wages. Didn't I tell you so before?"

"No."

"I forgot to do it, I reckon. Yes, she put 'em all to school, directly after she come up from Brighton. Well, good-day till I see you again."

Mrs. Kempton went down below stairs.

Rachel Wood laid the sleeping child on the bed, took off her own bonnet and shawl, and proceeded to make her room comfortable.

First she went to the corner cupboard and took from the bottom of it coal, kindling wood, waste paper and a box of matches, and soon lighted a cheerful fire in the grate.

Then she went down to the pump, got a pail of fresh water, returned and filled the teakettle, and hung it over the fire.

She had brought bread and other needful articles of food with her. And she soon had her own frugal little tea-table spread and the baby's pap prepared.

She had scarcely finished her tea, when the baby awoke and cried. She took it up, and fed it until it was satisfied, and then dressed it in clean night clothes, rocked it to sleep and put it to bed.

Then she found a great deal of cleaning up to do; for, however neat and nice any room may be when you lock it up and leave it for a few days, you will find it dusty enough when you come back and open it.

Rachel sat up till quite a late hour, working hard to restore her room to cleanliness and order.

Then, very tired, she was about to prepare for bed,

when her adopted baby again awoke and screamed, and again had to be taken up and fed, and soothed to quietness and rocked to sleep.

She had just laid her nursling down on the bed, and was cautiously drawing her hands from under its tiny form, so as not to awaken it, when she was startled by a smart rap at her door.

She glanced instinctively up at the clock, and saw that it was half-past eleven.

Then she went cautiously to the door, where the raps continued to be rattled fast and sharply, and she asked:

"Who is there?"

"It is I—Mrs. Sydney," said the sweetest voice Rachel had ever heard. "Oh, please open the door quickly."

Very much surprised, Rachel opened the door and saw standing at its threshold the most beautiful little dark woman she had ever seen in her life. She was rather tall, but slender and graceful. She had small, regular features, large soft black eyes, with very long, black eyelashes, and delicately traced eyebrows, and a veil of long, shining, jet-black hair, that hung down upon her shoulders in strong contrast with a rather dingy and shabby white flannel dressing gown. A broken-down lady Rachel saw at a glance.

"Oh, if you are a mother, as I know you are, because I heard your baby crying, come and help me! My darling little Freddy is in spasms. And my husband has not come in, and I don't know what to do. Oh, come quickly!" she breathlessly exclaimed, seizing the hand of Rachel and drawing her out.

Rachel followed the speaker willingly enough, as she led the way across the hall to the large front room opposite her own, and once occupied by the Flowers family.

It was now fitted up as a bedroom only, and with very shabby-genteel chamber furniture.

A single tallow candle burned on a little stand beside the crib, and by its light Rachel saw lying there a child of about twelve months old, deadly pale and rigid, with wide-open, stony eyes.

"Is he very ill? Is he in danger? Will he die? Oh,

will he die?" pasionately questioned the young mother, as she stood with Rachel beside the crib, gazing at her child and wringing her hands.

"No, no," said Rachel, soothingly. "Wait for me here a moment. I know what to do."

And she hurried over to her own room, and soon returned with the kettle of hot water from the hob of her grate in one hand, and a good-sized washtub in the other.

And in a little more time than it takes to tell it she had prepared a warm bath, undressed the child, and put him into it.

And soon the rigid limbs relaxed, the pallid face flushed, the still bosom heaved, the suspended breath came forth with a gasp and a sigh of relief, and the pretty eyes softened, closed and then opened again with a smile.

"There, he is all right now. He will live," said Rachel Wood, as she lifted the boy from his bath and wrapped him in a heated sheet, and took him to the fire to dry and dress him.

"He is saved! Oh, thank Heaven! Oh; bless you! bless you! bless you" exclaimed the young mother, as she followed Rachel to the fire and stood watching her work.

When Rachel had dressed the child in warm night clothes, and wrapped his feet in a piece of hot flannel and laid him in the crib, she would have bid the mother good-night and retired; but the poor little, pretty woman was frightened and nervous, and pleaded with her to stay longer.

"If it is not asking too much of you, I should be so greatly obliged. And, you know, if your baby should wake and cry, you could hear it quite distinctly in this room, for I heard it twice this evening."

"Certainly, I will stay, if you wish me to do so," said Rachel, seating herself beside the crib.

"Oh, yes, thanks; I do wish it. Charley—my husband, Captain Sydney, I mean—hasn't come in yet, and Heaven only knows when he will, poor fellow! And I

am in this huge, gloomy old place, where everything is strange; and I am frightened to be alone."

"But you have other and well-grown children, have you not?" gently inquired Rachel.

"Oh, dear, no! They are all babies. Look at them," said the young mother, pointing to a corner of the room, where, across the low trundle-bed, four little forms reposed—one having hair as black as jet, and the others hair as red as gold.

"All babies, indeed!" said Rachel, with an amused smile.

"Yes. I am am just twenty-four years old; and and I have been married seven years, and I have five children. The eldest, May, is six; the next, Charley, whom we call Chee, to distinguish his name from his father's, is four; Ada is three, Lily two, and Freddy one year old. And I am soon expecting another little one. Think of that!" said the heavily-burdened young mother, with tears brimming up to her dark eyes.

"Well, dear," said Rachel, soothingly, "you love them when they come, do you not? You would not part with one of your little ones for the whole world, would you, now?"

"Oh, no, indeed! Heaven forbid! I could bear anything in the world better than the loss of one of my children," answered the young mother, with a shudder.

"Then, welcome the babies when they come. They are God's gifts."

"Yes, they are. How many have you? Any but the little one I heard crying?"

Rachel reflected for a moment whether she should tell this lady the story of her adopted child, and she decided that she would not. She had taken the child as her own. As her own she would consider it and speak of it. A very tender sentiment toward this forlorn little creature made her feel unwilling to seem to deny it by telling every one that it was not her own, but an adopted child.

Poor Rachel never once reflected what sort of an ill construction might be put upon her conduct by those who did not know her character.

"You have no other child than the little one I heard crying?" again inquired Mrs. Sydney, repeating the question, but varying its form.

"No; no other child but that," answered Rachel, with a smile.

"Oh, how you must prize that only one! I hope it is healthy and likely to live."

"It is not very healthy now, but I shall try to make it so."

"I hope you will. You have saved my boy's life this evening. And you have a mother's prayers and blessings for that. I have been very unfortunate in everything but my children. Thank Heaven, I have been fortunate in them, for they have all been spared to me. Forgive me for talking about myself; but I have no sister or female friend whatever, nor ever have had, though I always longed for one. And your face seems to invite confidence. You also look as if you did not rightly belong to this place, any more than I do. You seem to have seen better days, as I have."

"Yes," answered Rachel. "I have seen better days—and worse ones than I now see; for though I am not as well off as I once was, yet I have peace and plenty of profitable work."

"I wish I could say that of myself. I wish I had peace. I wish I had plenty of profitable work, and was able to do it. But instead of that I have confusion. And I don't know how to work. Ah, my dear Mrs.—Mrs.——"

"My name is Rachel Wood. You will please call me Rachel! Everybody calls me so, and I am used to it," said the seamstress, gently.

"And I like the custom. You look as if your name was Rachel. You have such a grave, sweet, tender face. Ah, Rachel, it is years since I saw a face I could confide in as I can in yours."

"You may confide in me perfectly. I never betray confidence," answered the seamstress, who, without the least degree of a gossip's vulgar curiosity, felt a strange interest in this young creature's story.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SPENDTHRIFT.

"Well, Rachel. I was not always in such straitened circumstances as you find me now. My father is one of the wealthiest men in the city, and I am his only daughter."

"You don't say so! And he lets you and your children live in this place!" exclaimed Rachel Wood, in extreme surprise.

"He neither knows nor cares to inquire where or how his daughter and her children live," said the young mother, bitterly.

"Is he such an unnatural parent, then?"

"No; he was a fond father, and a just man. But seven years ago I gave him the deadliest offense."

"And he has never forgiven you?"

"No; for I have never repented."

"Oh, my dear! never repented having offended your dear father!" exclaimed Rachel, in a shocked tone.

"Never repented the act that offended him. So far from that, and knowing as well as I now know all the suffering that act has brought upon me, if it were to be done over again, I would do it over again and dare the consequences."

"I am much grieved to hear you say so."

"Maybe you would not be, if you knew what that act was. It was just the act of marrying my dear Charley! You would not have me repent that? You would not have me regret being the wife of my seven years' husband, and the mother of our five beautiful children?"

"No, no. I did not mean to say that," said Rachel, hastily. "But, my dear, have you ever sought a reconciliation with your father?"

"Have I ever? Often and often and often. I have written to him and sent to him, but without the least good effect."

"It is strange and sad that a father should be so implacable," said Rachel, with a sympathetic sigh.

"No, it isn't. You wouldn't think so, if you knew all."

"Then you know some reason for his implacability?"

"Ah! do I not? Ah, Rachel, it is the old, old reason, old as the hills! Old as sin, old as Satan, old as selfishness! It is a stepmother, my good Rachel—a stepmother, the natural enemy of all her husband's children who are not her own! A stepmother! well named stepmother, for she steps upon the children's necks to reach their rightful inheritance, whether of father's love or father's money."

Rachel was silent, for she thought of one young stepmother so different from this one of whom the lady spoke—of one young stepmother who was the best friend of her elderly husband's son and daughter.

Meanwhile Mrs. Sydney went on:

"When I married my poor Charley, my father was a widower, as he had been for many years. He was not considered a marrying man. But some old maid or other—I know she must have been quite old, for she has had no children, and therefore, indeed, there is the less excuse for her conduct in keeping alive my father's resentment against me—some old maid or other, painted and powdered and curled, enameled and made 'beautiful forever,' as the false phrase goes, took advantage of my dear father's anger against me, and flattered and fascinated and married him within three months after he had discarded me. And from the time of her marriage, as I do truly believe, she has set herself earnestly to keep me and my dear father apart. What's the use of talking about it? It is the way of stepmothers!"

Again Rachel was silent, for she was thinking of another stepmother, a young and lovely stepmother, placed in very much the same position as this elderly, self-seeking woman of the world, and who was doing her utmost to reconcile her husband to his discarded daughter, and who had been doing so for years—in vain! But Rachel said nothing. Mrs. Melliss' confidence was too sacred to be tampered with.

"I am as fully convinced as if I had seen her do it

that she intercepted and destroyed all my letters and Charley's letters to my dear father. And that she used arts, of the nature of which I cannot even guess—no honest mind could ever guess—to alienate his love and harden his heart against me! Rachel, my father was a fond father, and a just man. And what is more than all that, as charity is greater than faith or hope, my dear father was and is a charitable man. He judges the faults of others leniently; that, I take it, is the spiritual phase of charity. And he relieves the necessities of others liberally; that is the material form of charity. Yet, Rachel, I have been suffering with cold and hunger, I and my children. And I have written to my father and told him so, and implored his forgiveness, and his help for my perishing babes; and I have taken care that these letters should be delivered at his door. And yet I have had no answer! My stepmother, of course, intercepted the letters. It is the time-honored custom of stepmothers! It is the *rôle* of stepmothers. It is their fiendish mission on earth," said the young mother and discarded child, speaking with bitter hatred.

And still Rachel said nothing. She was still thinking of Mrs. Melliss, who was placed in a similar situation between her husband and his offending daughter, and yet whose conduct was so different from the conduct of this person whom Mrs. Sydney described.

Meanwhile, the young wife went on:

"Strangers were kinder to me than my own flesh and blood. If it had not been for the help of strangers, I should have suffered even more than I have. I was living in barracks with my poor Charley when my first child, little May, was born. He had but two small rooms for his quarters, and he was not able to take lodgings for me in town. I wrote to my father and begged his forgiveness, and told him my condition; but he would have no mercy on his daughter or his expected grandchild. But, of course, I know he never got my letter. His wife intercepted and destroyed it. And I should have wanted everything necessary for that trying time, if it had not been for some kind friend who sent me a complete outfit of invalid's and

baby's linen, and also a note for fifty pounds. That outfit, Rachel, has lasted me these six years, and has served me and all my five babies in turn. Look at this white flannel dressing gown I am now wearing. This was an item in that invalid outfit. It was very elegant once; but it is old and shabby and not overclean now. That is the worst of it. Poor ladies are the most wretched of poor women! They do not know how to do their own washing, and they cannot afford to put much of it out. I can wash small articles, like pocket handkerchiefs and collars, but such a thing as a dressing gown would be too heavy for me to work in the tub. I should only spoil it."

Rachel sighed with pity for the utter helpfulness of this poor wife and mother.

"I do believe my kind anonymous friends would have continued to help me, had they been able to keep trace of us. But poor Charley left the army, and we went to the Continent, and since that we have been wandering about. Now, my good Rachel, I have talked to you as freely as if I had known you all my life. But there are some people one does feel that way toward. And now tell me what you think of all this that I have told you," concluded the little lady with a sigh.

"I think, my dear, that a reconciliation with your father is not at all hopeless," said the seamstress.

"Not at all hopeless! And with a treacherous stepmother at his ear all the time!" hastily interrupted Mrs. Sydney.

"I think, my dear, if I were in your place, I should admit just the bare possibility that the stepmother may not be to blame in this matter; and that the father may be waiting for some acknowledgment from you of your fault toward him," said Rachel, gently.

The young lady made a gesture of impatience.

"How can I do that? I have asked him to forgive me. I can do no more. I cannot repent having married my dear Charley, bless him! And so how can I write as if I did?"

"I will tell you, my dear. You might write again to your father and tell him that though you could not

repent your marriage with a husband you have never ceased to love dearly, yet you were grieved for the manner of it which proved so offensive to him. And then once more ask for forgiveness and reconciliation," said Rachel.

"That would be very hard for me to do. I do not like to be a persistent beggar, even to my own father, or for my own poor children's sake. I think I have written often enough."

"Yet not in the way I now advise. Write once more, as I counsel you. And if you please, I will be your messenger and take it to your father, and put it with my own hands into his hands. It cannot do the least harm. It may do the greatest good," pleaded Rachel Wood.

"Oh, you are so kind to me, I will take your advice. I will, indeed. I will lose no time. I will write to-morrow. Do you know where my father lives?"

"No, indeed; I do not even know who he is. You have not mentioned his name," said Rachel, smiling.

"Oh, no; so I did not. I only told you he was one of the wealthiest men in London. Well, his name is—— Oh, dear, here comes my poor Charley, not himself again," suddenly exclaimed the young wife, breaking off in her discourse, as a man was heard walking up the hall, and singing as he came a fragment of a festive song.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Captain Sydney, cutting short his song, as he opened the door and discovered his wife still sitting up, and a strange woman with her. "Hallo! What's the matter, Molly? Nothing wrong, I hope?" he inquired, half-sobered by what he saw.

"No, Charley, dear; nothing wrong now. Poor little Freddy has been very ill. But this kind neighbor came in and put him in a hot bath, which relieved him; and he has been sleeping nicely ever since," she said.

And not a word of reproach did she utter, and not even an injured look did she put on.

"Good Heaven! What an infernal brute I am, to stay out so late and leave you alone! But when I get with those fellows——"

"Yes, I know, Charley dear," she said, hastily interrupting him. Then she turned to Rachel, and with sweet, grave courtesy, thanked her again for her services.

And the seamstress, taking this as a gentle hint to retire, bade good-night and returned to her room.

The next day Rachel waited indoors all the morning, fully expecting that Mrs. Sydney would come with the promised letter, for her to take to that lady's father. But Rachel waited long in vain.

The day was cold, so Rachel kept her room door shut, and kept up a warm fire in her grate, at which she sat and sewed steadily, for her needlework had got very much behindhand during the days of her attendance upon the deathbed of the poor ballet girl.

The young babe gave her but little trouble. It lay upon the bed and slept as steadily as babes of that tender age will do, waking only to be fed and put to sleep again.

Rachel listened, not in idle curiosity, but with benevolent interest, to hear some sound from the opposite room.

The house seemed very different to her, now that the old lodgers had gone away and these new people had come in.

Instead of the noisy tread and brutal oaths of Tony Brice, Jerry Juniper, and the shrill scolding of Madge and the perpetual wrangling of old Ruth Drug and old Granny Flowers, was only the patter of children's feet and the music of children's voices as they played in the hall.

The place was like heaven to what it had been.

Once Rachel opened the door and looked out upon them.

They were four as lovely children as were ever seen; but oh, so shabbily dressed!

There were two little red-haired girls and two little black-haired boys. The youngest child was not there.

The eldest child, a golden-haired fairy of six summers, seeing Rachel standing in the door and looking

out at their play, ran frankly up to her to make an apology, or to give an explanation.

"If you please, ma'am, I hope we don't disturb you. Our mamma sent us out here because poor papa is ill, quite ill, with brown paper and vinegar on his head, and he can't bear our noise."

"You don't disturb me, my dear; I like to see you enjoy yourselves. Go on and play as much as you please," said Rachel, kindly, as she returned to her room and closed the door behind her.

Now she understood why it was that Mrs. Sydney had not made her appearance with the promised letter. Of course, she had had no opportunity of writing it. Captain Sydney, after his night of revelry and dissipation, was suffering under the usual penal headache. And his poor little, adoring wife was in close attendance upon him.

Her heart ached for the sufferings of that young wife, with the superstitious love for the gay and handsome brute who had ruined her fortunes and almost destroyed her peace.

She no longer wondered at the implacability of the father. And, furthermore, she felt utterly discouraged as to the probable result of the daughter's promised letter, which she herself had offered to take to the father with such confident hopes of success.

She now thought it more than likely that the disgusted father would make it an absolute condition of his forgiveness that his daughter should separate herself from her husband.

And that, Rachel felt sure that Mrs. Sydney would never do.

While thus Rachel sat and sewed and ruminated, the door was quietly opened, and the banker's young wife, Mrs. Melliss, entered the room.

The lady was very plainly dressed, with a common waterproof tweed cloak that covered her whole gown, while its hood was drawn up over her little hat.

She looked quite disguised.

Rachel arose in astonishment, as well as with pleasure, to meet her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A BENEFACTOR.

"Mrs. Melliss!" exclaimed Rachel Wood, as she hastily arose, and laid the babe upon the bed.

"You are surprised to see me here, Rachel," said the banker's wife, smiling.

"On such a wet day, yes, madam; but I am very glad to see you. I hope you will not take cold," replied the seamstress, as she relieved the lady of her dripping water-proof cloak, hung it up to dry, and set a chair to the fire for her visitor.

"Oh, I am not at all susceptible to cold," answered Mrs. Melliss, as she sank into the offered seat, and set her feet up on the fender.

At this moment the baby, dissatisfied with being left upon the bed, set up a shrill squall.

"Oh, do take it up and bring it here for me to look at, dear," said the banker's wife, turning quickly toward the child.

The seamstress complied with the request.

"Rachel," said the lady, as she looked from the feeble young child to the face of the poor girl who had taken it—"Rachel, I have heard all about your adoption of this poor babe. Mary Kempton told me. Dear Rachel, I think it is a heavenly act."

"Oh, Mrs. Melliss, do not speak of it in that way, please. I am as proud of the possession of this little creature as ever a child was of a pet bird. It is something to love and care for and raise," replied Rachel.

"Well, my dear, the burden must not rest on you alone. You must let me help you to bear it."

"Dear madam, I do not feel this as a burden at all. I believe I shall be able to rear the child by my own exertions. If not, there is no one living I would call on to help me so quickly as yourself."

"That is right," replied the lady, with a sigh. And then she fell into thought, and gazed silently into the fire.

"Dear Mrs. Melliss," said the seamstress, at last, "you did not come here through the rain for nothing. Is it then, anything in which I can serve you?"

"Yes, Rachel. I came here to ask your advice and assistance."

The seamstress looked interested.

"The truth is, I have at length found a clew to my unfortunate stepdaughter and her husband," continued Mrs. Melliss.

Rachel startled and looked intently at the speaker, who went on to say:

"I have reason to believe that they are living in obscure lodgings in this very neighborhood."

"But you do not know exactly where?" inquired the seamstress.

"No, Rachel; it is to find out that, that I require your aid. I might employ a detective, but I confess I do not like to do so, if I can avoid it. Yet I am very anxious to find them, for I have heard what is most likely to be the truth, that they are in great poverty and distress."

"Mrs. Melliss, what was your stepdaughter's Christian name?" thoughtfully inquired Rachel.

"Why, Melinda, of course. Have you not heard me mention it?" smiled the lady.

"Yes, I have, once or twice; yet I hoped I might have been mistaken."

"Why?"

"Nothing. What was the name of the guardsman who married her, if you please, madam?"

"What! Did I never tell you his name?"

"Never."

"I think you must have forgotten; but his name was Faulkner."

"Faulkner! Oh!" muttered the seamstress, in a tone of disappointment.

"Why did you ask me, Rachel?"

"A fancy that I had. Nothing more. And now it seems quite unfounded. You are acquainted with this

gentleman, madam? You would know him if you should see him?" inquired Rachel.

"I am not at all acquainted with him, yet I should know him if I should see him, because I saw him once. My dear husband, while his anger was still very bitter against him, pointed him out to me in the park, telling me to note him well, and when I should see another man who looked like that, I might know him to be a villain. He quoted Shakespeare, you know. There, now! I ought not to have repeated that! But really it slipped out unawares. Forget it as soon as possible, Rachel."

"Mrs. Melliss," said the seamstress, after grave reflection, "I must go back to that fancy of mine, of which I said that it was unfounded. I do not think it was unfounded."

"What do you mean, my dear girl?"

"I fancy that the family you are in search of may be lodging in this very house."

"Rachel!"

"On this very floor, in the rooms opposite to my own."

"Tell me more."

"There is a poor gentleman, with a young wife and five bits of children, lodging here. Their name is not Faulkner, however; but still I can't help thinking they may be the family you are looking for."

"But, good gracious, girl, there are poor gentlemen enough besides him. But who is he, then?"

"He is also an ex-guardsman."

"Hum! There are broken officers enough, also. And my scamp's name was Faulkner."

"Yes; but there are other circumstances. This poor gentleman and ex-guardsman, while he was yet in the service, had eloped with the daughter of a wealthy man."

"Come! That begins to look something like the life of my scamp."

"The wealthy father discarded his only daughter and married again, and has remained unforgiving ever since."

"Rachel! Rachel! here is not only coincidence—here is identity. This is the family I am looking for," said Mrs. Melliss, eagerly, and rising in her excitement.

"But I am not so sure, either," suggested Rachel. "There are coincidences, indeed, but there are also discrepancies. It is true that the man you are in search of and the man who lodges here are both poor gentlemen, and both ex-guardsmen. Both ran away with only daughters, who were discarded by their fathers, who married again and remained implacable. But it is also true that the names are dissimilar. This man's name is Captain Charles Sydney, while the man you are looking for is called——"

"Charles Sidney Faulkner."

Rachel started slightly, and exclaimed:

"Indeed! Then I suppose it is the same. But this man calls his wife Molly, her name being, I presume, Mary; while your stepdaughter is named——"

"Melinda Mary. Her father always called her Melinda."

"And her husband calls her Molly. These differences in the names were not, however, the only circumstances that made me doubt the identity of this family with the family you seek."

"What other circumstances are there, Rachel? And how, my dear girl, did you come to know so much about these new lodgers?" inquired the lady, with much interest.

"I was called in there last night to see a sick child. I spent nearly the whole night with the mother, who happened to like me——"

"Happened to like you, Rachel, dear! I think that is what everybody does. But go on, my dear."

"She was very confiding. And she told me all her troubles—all that I have told you, and more besides."

"What else besides, dear? Tell me, for I wish to know everything in relation to this unfortunate girl."

"Well, Mrs. Melliss, she has a very wrong idea of you. She could never have seen you, or heard the truth about you."

"I have never in my life met my stepdaughter, I re-

gret very much to say," replied the young stepmother. "But what is her idea of me, then, Rachel?"

"You will not be displeased, I am quite sure, else I never would tell you. You will laugh when you hear that she is quite ignorant that her father married a beautiful young woman from motives of pure love and admiration——"

"Tut, tut, Rachel, dear! Leave all that, and tell me what she does think, poor child!" said Mrs. Melliss, blushing and smiling.

"Well, then, she thinks her father married only to spite her, his disobedient daughter. And that he married a cross old maid, who had been enameled and made 'beautiful forever' by Madam Rachel, and who had taken advantage of his temporary anger with his daughter to fascinate, entrap and marry him."

"That sounds very much like my story," said Mrs. Melliss, with a smile.

"Ver much, indeed!" laughed Rachel.

"And what more?"

"Why, she thinks that ever since her father's second marriage, his second wife has persistently prevented a reconciliation between that father and his daughter by intercepting letters, misrepresenting facts, and—and—— In short, dear Mrs. Melliss, she thinks her father's lovely young wife is the traditional wicked stepmother of all the story books!" concluded Rachel, with a smile.

The banker's young wife did not smile; she was very grave.

"Poor child! Poor child!" she murmured. "Does she really so much misunderstand me? I did not mind—I was even amused at her supposing me to be a painted and padded and wigged old maid, for that was really funny. But that she should think me a base and cruel and treacherous stepmother, who could harden the heart of her father against his suffering child! Oh, that hurts, Rachel! that hurts!" said the young wife, as tears filled her lovely eyes.

"I ought not to have told you," murmured Rachel, remorsefully.

"You ought, dear," sighed the lady.

"Yet, Mrs. Melliss, your stepdaughter cannot now be long in ignorance of your real character, and your true feeling toward her," said Rachel, soothingly.

"Yes, but she must, dear. I told you that Captain Faulkner must never know where the help comes from, that I shall send to his family. He is a gentleman, or should be one; and his feelings must be respected. Besides, dear Rachel, now that I think of it, it is better that Mrs. Faulkner should blame me than blame her father for this long estrangement," added the young stepmother, with a patient smile.

"And you will rest under this false accusation?"

"It is better that I should. Some day, when I shall have brought about this long-desired reconciliation, she will know the truth. And now, Rachel, dear, tell me all about them—everything that comes into your head. First, is she in good health?"

"No, she is just now delicate. She expects to be confined soon."

"How many children did you say?"

"There are five; the eldest, a lovely little golden-haired fairy, is just five years old; the second, a black-haired boy named Charley, but called Chee, is four; the third and fourth, Ada and Lily, are two fair-haired girls, aged respectively three and two years; and the fifth is another black-haired boy, aged one year. It has been noticed as a curious fact, that the girls are like their fair-haired father, and the boys like their dark-haired mother. But you might have seen them as you came in. All, except the youngest, were playing in the passage."

"Oh! I did see some children there. And I noticed that they were so thinly clad! Oh, poor little things! And so these were—my grandchildren!" said Mrs. Melliss.

"Your grandchildren," echoed Rachel Wood, with a smile.

"Well, my step-grandchildren, then. It is just the same," said the lovely young wife, gravely.

"Not quite just the same," thought Rachel Wood, as she looked at the beautiful, grave young face before her. But Mrs. Melliss was speaking.

"Rachel, we must now consult how to relieve their most pressing wants. Of course, it would be very easy to do it, if one could just go and put a sum of money in her hands; but we cannot do that. Of if one could send it by mail, and be sure that it would not fall into the hands of her spendthrift husband," said the lady, reflectively.

"Dear Mrs. Melliss, you might inclose a sum in a blank envelope, and give it to me to deliver into her own hands. I would take care to deliver it safely. You could trust me?" inquired Rachel.

"Trust you? Why, certainly! But you would be cross-questioned, Rachel."

"I could baffle a cross-questioner, without prevaricating, either," said Rachel.

"Then I will do as you suggest. Will you let me have an envelope?" inquired Mrs. Melliss.

Rachel arose to look for one. And this talk of an envelope reminded her of the letter she had advised the daughter to write to her father, and had offered herself to carry. As she returned to Mrs. Melliss with the requisite envelope in her hand, she told that lady of the circumstance, and inquired whether now it would be advisable to carry out the intention.

"Most certainly. Let Mrs. Faulkner write the letter, Rachel. And do you take charge of it and bring it to Mr. Melliss, and with your own hand put it into his, and then see what comes of it," answered Mrs. Melliss, as she filled the envelope with banknotes and sealed it up, and put it into the hands of Rachel, adding:

"And now, my dear girl, as I want to have the pleasure of selecting outfits for those children, I must beg you to try, in some delicate way, to get their measures for dresses, shoes, hats, and whatever else they may require. Can you, will you be able to do this without exciting their suspicion?"

"Oh, yes, they are such mere babies," answered Rachel, with a smile.

"And use your ingenuity in getting this into the hands of my stepdaughter without exciting her suspicions," added Mrs. Melliss, as she placed the envelope in Rachel's charge.

"Be sure that I will do so, dear Mrs. Melliss," answered the seamstress.

"And now," said the lady, rising with a smile, "as the rain seems to be over, I will try to get back to Charles street. To-morrow I will send Mary Kempton to inquire. We can trust her, you know."

"Oh, yes, indeed."

"And the next day I will come again in person. For I must tell you, Rachel, that I have not put much in that envelope—only what I happened to have in my purse, and scarcely enough to supply their immediate wants. So I must come again soon—say the day after to-morrow. And now, good-by, my dear," said the lady.

And she wrapped her waterproof cloak around her dress, and drew its hood up over her bonnet, and passed out of the room.

In the passage she saw the children still playing. She had been interested in them, even when she first saw them. How much more was she attracted to them, now that she knew who they were!

She went up to the group and laid her hand on the golden head of the oldest.

The little creatures all with one accord shrank away from the cloaked and hooded form, until they saw the bright and lovely face smiling under the hood, and then they clustered around her. She patted their little heads and felt in her pocket to find if she had any change left. She drew forth a few of the smallest silver coins, threepenny and fourpenny pieces, and distributed them to the children, telling them to buy buns with the money.

"Who divved it to us?" inquired little two-year-old Lily.

"What did you say, darling?"

"Se ast you who divved us dis putty money," explained little three-year-old Ada.

"Why, I did, my little loves!"

"But who is oo?" persisted little Lily.

"Dirls, don't ast twestions," rebuked four-year-old Charley.

"We only wanted to know your name," explained golden-haired Mary, the oldest child.

"Ess! Who is oo?" persisted little Lily.

"Well, I am your own Fairy Grandmother. That is my name—Fairy Grandmother. Will you remember it?"

"Ess, I remember. Fay Dammer. Oo tome adain, Fay Dammer?" inquired Lily, while the other little ones looked on.

"Yes, darling, be sure I will come again. Good-by, babies."

"Tiss Illy dood-by, den," said the child, putting up its rosy lips.

"Yes, I'll kiss Lily, and Lily's little sisters and brothers also. Good-by, darlings, all" said the lady, as she stooped and kissed them all in turn, and then left them.

"Ets do by take," said little Ada, jumping up, with her threepenny piece in her hand.

"Ess, ess," said Lily.

But grave little Mary said:

"No, no; listen to me. Poor mamma hadn't any tea for breakfast, and her head ached, and she wanted some tea. And papa told her why didn't she buy some. And mamma said she hadn't got no money, and the man at the shop wouldn't trust her no longer. Now I tell you what let us do. Let's all give our money to poor mamma to buy tea with."

"Ess, ess, ets div all our money to poor mamma to buy tea wiz," chimned in all the generous little hearts with one accord, and they eagerly arose and ran to the door of their parents' room.

Their innocent clamor brought out the mother, looking very much worried.

"For goodness' sake, children, make less noise! Mary, a great girl of five years old like you might keep your little sisters quiet, one would think! Your poor, dear papa——"

"But we's dot so heap of money to div you to buy tea

wiz," said little Lily eagerly, while the others chined in, and all with one accord forced their small coins on their mother with such haste that the silver pieces scattered down upon the floor.

"Where did you get all this money, you little beggars?"

"A lady divved it to us," said Lily.

"Oh, a booful lady!" added Ada.

"Such a lovely, lovely, lovely lady, mamma, dear!" explained Mary.

"What lady? What are you all talking about? You confuse me so you make my head ache worse than it did before! What was her name?" inquired the mother, as she stooped and helped her little daughter Mary to gather up the smal coins.

"Fay Dammer," quickly responded Lily.

"Who?"

"Fay Dammer, Fay Dammer! Tan't oo hear? Fay Dammer," repeated little Lily.

"What in the world does the child mean, Mary? Can't you speak?" inquired the nervous and irritable mother.

"She means fairy grandmother, mamma dear. It was a lady in a dark cloak and a hood drawn over her head, and she come out of Miss Wood's room. And she patted our heads and gave us money. And when Lily asked her who she was, she laughed and said she was our fairy grandmother."

"Fairy godmother, I suppose you mean?" said their mamma.

"No, grandmother, mamma, not godmother," answered Mary.

"Ess, Dammer! Fay Dammer," added Lily, emphatically.

"I suppose some well-to-do customer of Mrs. Wood's who loves children, and gave you this to buy cake."

"Yes, mamma, dear," said Mary.

The poor mother counted the money. There were but eighteen pence in all. It was not much, but quite enough to buy a quarter of a pound of good tea.

The poor woman looked at the silver, and then at the

little, upturned, eager faces. She hated to take the money from her children, but she longed for a cup of tea, as only a woman with a nervous headache could. And those little faces, too, were all so full of delight at the idea of their having something that they could give their mother.

"Well, my poor little loves, I will borrow some of your little money, but not all of it. Here, Mary, come get a little basket and a little tin cup, and go to the corner of the lane, to Mrs. Quigley's, and buy me an ounce of good tea, and an ounce of white sugar, and a pennyworth of milk—that will be one and two pence in all; and then you'll have a penny apiece to spend," said the young mother, as she retreated into the chamber and came out again with a small basket and a can, which she gave to her eldest little daughter, together with the money. She then repeated her directions to the child. And the "grave fairy," though but five years old, was quite capable of understanding, remembering and executing them.

"May we do wis Mary to 'pend our pennies, mamma, dear?" inquired tiny Lily.

"Yes, darling, you may all go. Take care of the children, Mary, dear," said the mother.

And the little matron of five promised to do so, and went on her errand, followed by the troop.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE GAMBLER'S HOME.

Mrs. Faulkner had scarcely closed the door behind her children, when she was slightly startled by a soft rap.

She went and opened the door again.

Rachel Wood, who had just succeeded in putting her baby to sleep and getting it out of her arms, stood there.

"Oh! I am sorry I cannot ask you to come in; but

my husband is quite ill in bed just now," said Mrs. Faulkner, apologetically, holding the door but half open.

Yet while she held it so, her visitor quite unwillingly caught a glimpse of the gambler's home by daylight. How squalid it really looked! How much worse by sunlight than by tallow candle light! And oh! how much cleaner, decenter and more comfortable the poor ballet girls had made their old grandparents in this same room, than this gentleman now occupying it made his wife and little children!

All this passed rapidly through the mind of Rachel Wood, while Mrs. Faulkner stood there apologizing for not inviting her in.

"Say no more, dear lady. I came to ask you to step into my room for a few minutes. I have something to say to you which indeed I would not like to say here, or in the presence of any other person."

"Oh, it is about the letter that I am to write to my father, and that you are to carry."

"About that and other matters. Will you come now?"

"N-no—not exactly come just now. I should not like to leave the captain quite alone. But as soon as my little woman Mary returns to sit with her father, I will come. Will that do?"

"Thanks, yes, that will do. I shall wait for you," answered Rachel Wood, and, with a nod, she returned to her own room.

Mrs. Faulkner meanwhile filled her kettle and set it over the fire. Notwithstanding all that she had said to Rachel, she was resolved to have that cup of tea before she would stir from the room.

At last her grave little matron returned, followed by all the little children of her charge, each child being made happy in the possession of a Bath bun.

"Here are all the things, mamma, dear, just as you told me to buy them; look and see," said the little five-year-old woman, as she sat the basket and the can before her mother.

"Yes, darling, everything is just right, and you are a

dear little girl and your mother's right hand," said Mrs. Faulkner, affectionately caressing her little daughter.

Little Mary was destined to distinguish herself as an artist in after days, and to receive much praise from competent critics; but no praise ever sounded so sweet in her ears as this, uttered by her poor mother.

Mrs. Faulkner made her cup of tea and enjoyed it, felt herself relieved of her nervous headache, and then left her stupefied husband and her infant children in the charge of her little woman, and went to see what Rachel Wood wanted with her.

She found the poor seamstress sitting by her small fire, and, as usual, engaged in needlework.

Rachel rose at once and offered the visitor a seat. And when the latter had taken it, the former said:

"It was not only about the letter to your father that I wished to speak with you alone, madam, but about something else—a delicate mission that is intrusted to me."

"A delicate mission?" echoed the gambler's wife.

"Yes, madam, and intrusted to me by one of your best and truest friends."

"By one of my best and truest friends?" again echoed the poor lady, who seemed unable to do much more than echo the words of the seamstress.

"Yes, said Rachel.

"I did not know that I had a friend left in the world," replied the lady, with a bitter sigh.

"You have many, let us hope. And did not you yourself tell me of good friends who ministered to you in times gone by, and whom you thought would still serve you, had you not withdrawn yourself from their knowledge?"

"Oh, yes! But they did their good work anonymously. I do not even suspect who they are. I have no means of communicating with them, nor they with me," said the poor lady, sadly.

"Yet they have not lost sight of you, perhaps; for I have this morning received a visit from a lady who thinks that you have claims upon her, and who has left this packet with me to be placed in your hands. It is a

debt that she thinks she owes you; so pray do not feel any embarrassment or reluctance in receiving it," said Rachel, as she placed the envelope containing the bank-notes in the hand of her visitor.

Mrs. Faulkner opened the envelope and examined its contents.

"This is an alms!" she exclaimed, as a flush of shame suffused her face and neck.

"No, believe me, dear lady, it is not. So much I may at least tell you. It is left for your by one who feels that she owes you much more even than that sum," said Rachel, earnestly.

"Who is it?" inquired the poor lady.

"I am not at liberty to tell you. Some day you will know, but not yet.

"I hate mystery! And I utterly abhor—alms!"

"Here is mystery I grant you. But some time it will be cleared up. But here are not alms. This is your right, madam. You may receive it without the slightest danger to your self-respect."

"If I thought so——"

"I assure you it is so! The money is your right, I tell you, madam."

"My right! Oh, then it must come from my father!" exclaimed the poor lady, darting a penetrating glance at the face of the seamtress.

Rachel dropped her eyes and continued silent. In one sense the money certainly did come from her father, since it was sent by her stepmother from the private income settled upon the latter by her generous husband.

"You do not answer. Say, did it not come from my father?" persistly inquired Mr. Melliss' daughter.

"I pray you, madam, not to press me with questions that my honor forbids me to answer," said Rachel.

"Oh, well. That is quite enough. Now I know that this money does come from my dear father. May Heaven bless him!" fervently exclaimed the lady.

"I must entreat you, dear lady, to draw no inferences from my silence," earnestly replied Rachel.

"Oh, be tranquil, you good soul! You have done

your best to perform your mission and to keep your secret. You can do more. If I have seen through the little mystery, it is no fault of yours," said Mrs. Faulkner, with a gay laugh.

"I beseech you, madam, that you will not form hasty conclusions. My pledged word forbids me to explain, but——"

"Oh, you dear creature, you needn't explain! I know all about it. I know now that my poor, dear, darling old daddy has been my secret benefactor all along. I mean, that I know it was he who sent me fifty pounds in money and about a hundred and fifty more in baby linens and invalid's outfit, when I was confined with my first child at Brighton. I know it all now; What a fool I must have been not to have known it before! Who in all the world but my own father, would have cared enough for me to have done all that?"

Rachel sighed. She longed to justify the banker's lovely young wife, and to say, "Who? who? who but your angel stepmother?" And then to tell her the whole story of Angela's goodness. But she was bound by her promise to Mrs. Melliss not to reveal that lady as the benefactress of her husband's discarded daughter.

"My dear father!" continued the poor lady. "Ah! I see how it is! He would have forgiven us and brought us home to himself long ago if it had not been for the adverse influence of that base, cruel, treacherous woman whom he has made his wife! He has fallen completely into her power. He can do nothing openly for his poor daughter and her suffering children. Ah! how he must repent his marriage! Oh, I wonder if it is wicked to wish that woman would die?"

It was on Rachel's tongue to say: "You do a sweet and lovely lady bitter injustice." But again her promise sealed her lips. It was very hard to sit still and hear all this. But she had one consolation—in looking forward to that surely coming day when Melinda Faulkner would know her best friend and be filled with repentance for all this.

"And to think my dear father has been my secret

benefactor all this while! Well, I can take this money, since it comes from him. And now about the letter, Rachel. Under these changed circumstances, had I better write it?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I will do so. And had I not better thank him for this assistance?"

"Decidedly not!" said Rachel, in some alarm, "for you have no evidence that it does come from him."

"Oh, but I am morally certain that it does. And I think perhaps I shall allude to it in my letter in a delicate and distant way, so as to let him see that I am very grateful."

"I think you had better do nothing of the sort. And now I must tell you, madam, that the donation did not come directly from your father."

"Did not come directly? Oh! how you try to guard the secret! Of course it did not come directly. It came through you. And perhaps through others also. But you cannot deny that this came originally from my father!" said the lady, in a tone of confidence and triumph.

No, Rachel could not deny that; for, of course, all Mrs. Melliss' income came from her husband. And neither could Rachel explain this, for her promise tied her tongue.

"It is ten pounds! It is more money than I have had for the last five years. But oh! so many things to get out of it! I must have tea and sugar and coffee. I must have meat and potatoes, and coals and kindling wood. All that immediately! Then I must buy bed linen, blankets, quilts and underclothing," murmured the poor lady to herself, counting over her money and her wants, half in childish delight, half in womanish anxiety; for, after all, the money might not hold out.

"Rachel," she said, suddenly rising, "I have a favor to ask of you. I am always asking favors of people, especially if they are so imprudent as to grant me the first one. I am a regular sponge upon people, Rachel —for their services, I mean."

"I am sure you are nothing of the sort. And I shall

be very happy to serve you in any way," answered the seamtress.

"Thanks, my dear woman. I knew you would."

"Is it about your father's letter?" inquired the seamtress.

"Oh, no, not that. I cannot write that to-day. I must go out now and make my purchases; for we want everything, Rachel, everything, everything—from loaves of bread to clean sheets."

Rachel could well believe it, from the daylight glimpse she had got into the gambler's home. But she said:

"Do you wish me to assist you in making these purchases to-day? I am quite ready to do so."

"Oh, no, my dear woman, no. I shall go out and take a cab, for I cannot walk far in my state of health. And I shall bring all my purchases home with me. No; what I want you to do for me, is to give an eye to my little ones out in the passage. My little woman Mary will have to stay in the room and watch her father, but the others will have to stay out there in the passage by themselves; and if you could only give an eye to them——"

"Oh, I will have them in the room here," said the seamstress. "It must be cold for the poor little ones out there."

"Oh, thank you! Yes, indeed, I know it is cold for the poor darlings. But ah! I cannot help it. If they are allowed to stay in our room where there is a fire, their noise disturbs their poor, dear father, so I have to send them out there."

Indignation swelled the honest heart of the seamstress. Here was this infatuated woman, not only devoting herself to her dissipated husband, but even risking her children's lives by leaving them out in the cold passage, lest their innocent prattle should disturb his drunken sleep. But Rachel said nothing.

And yet this poor, mistaken young mother loved her children, too. And now, with the tears springing to her eyes, she told Rachel about the money that the strange

lady had given them, and how they came to her with it and gave it all to her to buy tea with.

"They are sweet and lovely children. They should not be exposed or neglected on their father's account," Rachel ventured to say.

"Oh, yes," replied their mother, ignoring the latter part of Rachel's speech. "They are sweet and lovely children. They are all affectionate and generous. And they take all their sweetness and generosity of disposition from their dear father. Poor Charley! he is so fond of us all. He is perfectly devoted to us. He would do anything in the world for us."

"Except to restrain his own evil appetities, that are destroying himself and you," thought Rachel, but she said nothing.

And now Mrs. Faulkner was going. And Rachel accompanied her to the door, and called the three little children who were out in the passage to come into her room.

The other two—the eldest and the youngest—were in their parents' room.

Rachel took a little bench and put it before the fire, and told the children to sit there and warm themselves. Their little hands were blue with cold, and they were shivering in their thin and insufficient clothing.

"Fere is Fay Dammer?" inquired little two-year-old Lily, the brightest of the group.

"Where is who, darling?" asked Rachel.

"Se means Fayee Gammer," explained little Ada.

But Rachel shook her head.

"Oh, they can't talk plain. It is Fairy Ganmother," expounded Master Charley, in the confident wisdom of four years.

"Oh! Fairy Grandmother. You must mean the lady who gave you the silver bits?" smiled Rachel.

"Ess!" said little Lily. "Fay Dammer."

Rachel explained that she had gone home, but would some day return.

And then, in a playful sort of a way, she told them that she wanted to see how big they were. And so, one after the other, she measured the children for their

clothes and shoes, and made memoranda of the measurement to send to Mrs. Melliss.

After two hours' absence, Mrs. Faulkner returned, radiant with delight at her purchases. They were in the cab before the house; and it took her and the cabman three or four journeys up and down stairs before they were all safely stowed away in her bare sitting-room. Then she paid the cabman and sent him away; and finally she came into Rachel's room and sat down, panting with fatigue and smiling with delight.

"I have bought all the real necessaries that we require, and I have spent eight pounds. Ah, dear me! I could have spent the other two also, but I saved them for poor, dear Charley. I know he hasn't a penny. Those dreadful men he supped with last night cleared him out. And it is so mortifying to a man not to have any money in his pocket," she said, confidentially.

"Especially when he wants it to drink up, or to gamble it away," thought Rachel, indignantly, but still she said nothing.

Mrs. Faulkner then thanked the seamstress for her care of the children, and would have taken them away, but Rachel said:

"Leave them with me, if you please, until you can take them into your own room. The passage is too cold and damp for children."

"Oh, thank you, dear; but I have coals and kindlings now, and I am going to have a fire in my sitting-room for the children. And I would like you also to come in and see my purchases," said the young mother.

"Thank you. I will keep the children until the fire is made for them, and then I will take them in and look at your purchases," replied Rachel.

Her visitor went away. Half an hour later Rachel kept her promise, and took the children into the sitting-room, which adjoined the Faulkners' bedroom, and had once been the apartment of the stage carpenter's family.

Here Rachel found a good fire, and also the other two children.

She examined and admired the purchases, and said,

what she really thought, that the money laid out in them had been very judiciously expended.

Then she requested, as a favor, that Mrs. Faulkner would send her eldest and youngest child to see her in the course of that afternoon, as she wished to get acquainted with them also.

And their mother gave her promise that they should be sent.

So, a little later in the afternoon, the grave little matron Mary entered Rachel's room, bending under the burden of the twelve months old baby Freddy, whom she brought in her arms.

Rachel relieved the little woman of her charge, and gave her a seat. And then she played with the baby and chatted with the little girl, until she had contrived to measure them for shoes and clothes. Then she let them go. And she added the new measures to the memoranda she had prepared to send Mrs. Melliss.

She saw no more of the Faulkner family that day. But at night she heard Captain Faulkner noiselessly get up and dress himself and go out.

And she felt sure that the irreclaimable gamester had gone off to gamble away the money his fond and foolish wife had given him.

If the man returned home at all that night, Rachel never knew it.

The next morning Mary Kempton came, according to Mrs. Melliss' promise.

Rachel gave her the memoranda of the children's measures in a sealed envelope. She also wrote a short note to Mrs. Melliss, telling that lady how she had executed her commissions.

After Mary Kempton went away, Rachel put her child to sleep, dressed herself in her outdoor garments, and went to carry some work home.

As she passed on to the head of the stairs, she heard the Faulkner children at play in the sitting-room. She felt glad that they had a fire, as she went down the stairs.

She took her work home to the outfitter in St. Paul's Churchyard. And then finding herself in the neighbor-

hood of the children's hospital, where little Benny was staying, she thought she would call and ask after him.

Fortunately it was "visiting day." And when she inquired at the office, she was directed to the ward where the child lay.

It was a long room, with two rows of windows on each side, and two rows of little white beds, each bed between two windows, and there was a broad aisle up the middle.

About half the number of beds were occupied by children. About half a dozen nurses were in attendance. As yet there seemed to be no visitors.

Rachel named the little patient she wished to see, and she was at once shown the bed on which little Benny lay.

She went up to look at him. She saw him and turned away her head. She could scarcely restrain herself from breaking into hysterical tears.

He looked so like death, yet so beautiful in death. His bed and his clothes were as clean and white as new-fallen snow. His wan face was as white as his pillow; his blue eyes were half closed, and his bright gold hair was pushed away from his fair, broad brow, and lay in little glittering, tangled curls each side his face, upon the pillow.

"That is a beautiful child. You are a friend of his?" inquired the nurse who stood beside the bed.

"Yes," said Rachel, scarcely able to speak for emotion. "Is he very ill? Will he recover?" she inquired.

"While there's life there's hope," evasively answered the nurse.

"May I speak to him?"

Oh, yes; the doctor thinks it best to rouse him sometimes."

"Benny, dear Benny," said Rachel, bending over him.

He opened his gentle eyes and looked at her.

"Do you know me, Benny?"

"Yes, Rosy," he softly replied.

She could no longer restrain her feelings, but burst into tears.

"Don't cry, Rosy. I know you are hungry. I'll try

to get up and go out and—get you something—I——"

And with this the poor little fellow tried to raise himself on his elbow and put one foot out of the bed; but immediately fell back, exhausted and fainting.

"Nev—nev-never mind, Rosy! Don't cry! I'll just rest myself a little bit—and then I'll go—and get you something to eat!" he murmured at intervals and with difficulty, panting and gasping between his words.

"Oh! this is——" Rachel began, but her sobs choked her voice. She dropped her head upon the side of the bed and wept bitterly.

"You will cry?—Don't cry, Rosy—There! I'll get up and go now—Oh! I can't—it is so dark——"

"I had better go. He takes me for somebody else, and my presence excites him, I am afraid," said Rachel.

"Oh, no, you don't hurt him. The doctor dreads coma worse than anything else for him—— Oh! here comes her grace!" suddenly said the nurse, in a low tone, as she broke off from her first discourse.

Rachel turned her head and saw a distinguished party of visitors entering the room.

"Who did you say was coming?" she inquired of the nurse.

"Her Grace the Duchess of Cheviot."

Benny's mother!

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LITTLE OUTCAST.

Yes, it was she—the beautiful young Duchess of Cheviot, attended by a brilliant party.

What did she in the Middlesex Hospital for Children?

Well, the duke and duchess were entertaining a foreign prince at Cheviot House. And they were showing his serene highness the sights of London, especially its "charities."

And this morning they had brought him here.

The party consisted of the prince, the Duke and Duchess of Cheviot, their son, the young Earl of Wellrose, and a gentleman in waiting on his serene highness.

The distinguished party approached the bed occupied by little Benny, and which was nearest to the door of entrance.

Rachel Wood had never seen the young duchess, but she would have recognized the beautiful patrician anywhere by the portraits she had seen of her in the photographic galleries and the print shops. Rachel withdrew to a short distance as the party came up.

The prince, a slim little old man, with very red hair and beard and a wizened face, and dressed in plain citizen's suit of black, stuck his glass to his eye and bent over the child.

"A fair, pretty boy! A very interesting looking boy! What, then, is his malady, nurse?" he inquired, in the German language.

The good woman shook her head in despair, and courtesied. She did not understand a word he said.

"What is the matter with the boy, nurse?" then inquired the duchess.

"A low fever, your grace," answered the woman, with another courtesy.

"A fever!" muttered the prince, hastily moving on.

"This is not a contagious fever, your highness. There are no cases of contagious fever in this ward. Is it not so, nurse?" inquired the duchess.

"Certainly, your grace; the fever cases, which I mean to say contagious cases, are all on the other side of the building," answered the nurse, with the inevitable courtesy.

"It is quite true, madam. There is not, I assure you, the slightest danger of infection from these cases," added the physician in charge of the hospital, who was in attendance upon the distinguished visitors, but who had been unavoidably detained for a moment at the door, and had now come up.

But his serene highness was anything but serene at

this moment. He moved on, followed by the duke and the gentleman in waiting.

The young duchess and the little earl lingered by the bedside of the sick child.

The physician stood halting between two opinions—whether to follow the prince, or to wait for the lady.

"Are you not coming, Eglantine?" inquired the duke, stepping back to her side.

"No, Willie, dear; not just yet. You and the doctor attend the prince. You will find me and Alick here on your return," replied the young duchess.

"Come, doctor," said the duke.

And the physician no longer hesitated between two opinions, but followed the duke to the spot where the prince and his gentleman were both "waiting."

Meanwhile the young duchess and the little earl stood by the bedside of Benny.

The sick boy lay with his white face, hollow cheeks, half-closed blue eyes, broad forehead and damp golden hair, quite still.

"Poor, poor, poor little pale face!" muttered the duchess in a tone of the deepest compassion, as her tears fell fast upon his pillow.

Why did she gaze so fondly on him? Why did she weep so much? Why, indeed, did she linger so long at his bedside, when there was so much more to see in this hospital?

Who could tell?

Certainly she could not. She even wondered at herself that she should be so overcome at the sight of a sick pauper child who was a perfect stranger to her.

For she did not recognize him as a child that she had ever seen before. And yet she had seen him twice, at long intervals—once as a babe in a beggar's arms, and once as a poor street boy, on Brunswick terrace, at Brighton. And now she saw him again as a patient in the Middlesex Hospital for Children.

She could not recognize him. Still less could she have the faintest suspicion that this poor little patient sufferer, lying on a pauper's pallet bed, was her own child, her first born, the real Earl of Wellrose, the real

heir to the renowned Douglas, with their ancient Dukedom of Cheviot, privileges, titles, dignities, enjoyed now by his younger brother; while he, deprived of all his rights, outcast, disowned, neglected, perverted, half famished for want of food, half frozen for want of fuel, half poisoned from foul air, had found his way to the fever ward of the pauper children's hospital.

Ah! if titles and estates, if rank and respect, had been all that this child had been deprived of, though much in themselves, they would have been little in comparison with his other losses—of mother's, father's, sisters', brothers' love, of moral and religious training, of cleanliness and decency.

In some occult manner, something of the truth of all this must have found its way to the unconscious mother's spirit, as she gazed upon her unknown child. Else why should she weep so abundantly?

"She has a very tender heart," whispered the nurse apart, to Rachel Wood.

"Yes, it is evident that her extensive charities spring from her benevolent heart alone, and not from a vain love of praise," murmured the seamstress, in a low voice.

The young duchess dried her eyes and looked up, and inquired:

"Who is this poor boy, nurse?"

"I don't know, please your grace, let alone his being of Number Three," of this hospital. But the clerk he could tell your grace from the books," answered the nurse, as she respectfully approached the duchess.

"Will he die?" softly inquired the weeping lady.

The nurse glanced over her shoulder toward Rachel Wood, who still stood modestly withdrawn to a short distance, and then answered in a very low tone:

"Yes, your grace; though I shouldn't like to have that poor young 'oman hear me say so, she being a friend o' hizzen."

The young duchess followed with her eye the direction of the nurse's glance, and saw a consumptive-looking, poorly clothed young woman, whom she took to be the elder sister or young aunt of the boy; but she was

immediately recalled from her observation by the continued voice of the woman:

"But the doctor says he can't possibly live through to-night, your grace, or to-morrow, at farthest. He will die."

"Thank God!" fervently, tearfully breathed the duchess.

And she put down her veil to hide the traces of her tears, and, followed by her son, went to meet and rejoin her party.

Rachel Wood bent over the child and called him:

"Benny! Benny! Benny! Wake up, dear!"

But the boy only rolled his head and murmured in his dying dream.

"Benny, do you know me? Benny, dear, it is Rachel Wood, your friend," she said, slightly shaking him.

But the boy only sighed, murmured about a lovely lady, a ring and a wreath, and relapsed into stillness.

"Benny! Benny, darling! Wake up! Rouse yourself! Look at me! Speak to me!" exclaimed Rachel, taking him bodily and lifting him up in a sitting posture.

The child opened his eyes wide, stared at the speaker, murmured some coherent promise as to what he would do for her when he got to be "a big man," then drew a deep breath and sank a dead weight in her arms.

Rachel looked up in alarm at the nurse.

"Lay him down. He is gone, poor dear," said the woman gently.

"Gone!" echoed Rachel in a faint voice.

"Yes, gone. He is dead. It came sooner than we expected. I am sorry for you, poor dear; for belike you are a near relation of hizzen."

"Poor, dear little Benny!" murmured Rachel, stooping and pressing her lips to his pale forehead.

"War 'e a hoffing, ma'am?" inquired the nurse.

"I suppose he was an orphan," answered Rachel, who did not wish to answer the question by entering into any details of the boy's little history.

And before the nurse could inquire further, the physician returned from seeing his distinguished visitors out.

Noticing that something had happened on the bed nearest the door, the physician stopped in passing, and inquired:

"What is it, nurse?"

"Number Three is gone, sir," she answered.

He came up to the bed, took the little, thin wrist in his hand for a moment, and then laid it down, saying:

"Yes. I will give orders for the removal of the body."

And the physician passed on and left the ward by the door at its furthest extremity.

"Where will they take him?" whispered Rachel.

"To the dead-house," answered the nurse.

Rachel lingered a little longer, and then seeing the opposite door open and two men bearing between them a stretcher, she stooped and pressed a good-by kiss upon little Benny's brow, and turned and went out.

She bent her steps homeward.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A COMFORTER.

When Rachel Wood reached the house in Junk lane she found a crowd collected before the doors—a very disreputable crowd of ragged, dirty and more or less tipsy men and women, boys and girls.

Surprised and alarmed, yet not daring to question any one that she saw outside, Rachel Wood made her way through them as best she could and entered the house, and turned into Mrs. Kempton's old-clothes shop.

"What on earth is the matter outside?" she inquired of the mistress of the shop, who was, as usual, sitting sewing behind the counter, in her grove of dangling dresses.

"Oh, Rachel, it's inside the matter is, not outside! The captain's took!" said the old-clothes woman.

"Took! Do you mean that Captain Faulkner has been arrested?"

"Captain Sydney, child; Captain Sydney have."

"What for, for Heaven's sake?"

"For debt, in course; what else? But sit down Rachel—sit down, girl; you look ready to drop," said Mrs. Kempton, pushing a chair toward her visitor.

Rachel went round the counter, and took the offered seat.

"And now tell me all about it," she said.

"Lor, child, you hadn't hardly turned your back—leastways, I know you hadn't more'n turned the corner of the lane into the alley—afore the sheriff's officer come and levied onto all their goods—all, Rachel, everythink—even the new blankets and things as she bought yesterday, poor thing!"

"Oh, I am very sorry to hear this," sighed the seamstress.

"The captain he was out at the time; and the poor wife! Oh, you ought to a seen how she cried and screamed and wrung her hands and went on, pleading with the officers to take pity on her poor children, which in course the men couldn't do, being obligated to perform their dooty."

"And has not Captain Faulkner returned?" inquired Rachel.

"Captain Sydney, you mean? Oh, lor, yes. He came back right in the middle of it all. No sooner had the captain come in, and before he had time to bluster and blow up the baillies, as he was just about to do, in comes another baillie with another writ for another debt, and nabs my captain himself, and hauls him off to prison. Oh, then you should a seen how the wife went on! All she said and did before was nothing to it. She raved; she tore handfuls of hair out of her head. I took hold of her, and it was as much as ever I could do to hold her. And all this had no more effect on them there baillies than nothing at all."

"But the captain? What a severe trial it must have been to him, poor man, to be taken away from his wife at such a time!" said Rachel.

"You'd better believe it. It run him wild. He struggled to get away from the officers and come to her. And

when they held him fast, he got one arm free, and doubled his fist and dealt one of 'em such a smasher between the eyes as must a made the man see more stars than ever was created. Then they tripped him up and threw him down, and conquered him, and dragged him, swearing, away to prison."

"And the poor wife?"

"She fainted dead away, through fright. And I held her in my arms until they'd took the captain off. And then, seeing one o' the mattresses thrown down on the floor, I laid her on it, and said, 'There! you cruel, hard-hearted wretches, drag that from under her, if you dare!' I couldn't help saying it, although I know'd all the time that as the poor men were only doing of their duty. But they didn't take the last bed away, nor never give me no jaw back for what I said to them, neither."

"How is the poor lady now?" inquired Rachel.

"Well, quieter than she was. I soon fotch her out'n her fainting fit. And I staid with her until the men were all gone, and then I left her with the children. Ah! poor little things! they cried, and screamed through it all, too, though nobody paid no attention to them."

"I will go up now and see the poor lady," said the seamstress, rising.

When Rachel reached the fourth floor, she at once saw the signs of the recent domestic storm, in the desolation around the place. The doors of two rooms stood open, and she saw that the furniture had been carried off, and the floors covered with the litter of the violent removal. She meant to go at once to the assistance of the afflicted family. But first it was necessary to look into her own room to see her adopted baby, from whom she had been absent two hours. She had fed him and put him to sleep just before she left the house, so she knew that he could not have suffered from hunger in the meanwhile.

She went in and found him lying awake, but quiet. She warmed some food, took him up and fed him again, and land him down.

Then she went and rapped at the closed door of the Faulkners' bedchamber.

The voice of the young wife bade her to come in.

She entered the room and found a scene of heart-breaking desolation.

The furniture had all been taken away with the exception of one poor mattress that was thrown down upon the floor. On this lay the young mother, with her five babies weeping around her. Old wearing apparel, thrown out from the bureaus and presses that had been seized, was strewn about the floor. There was nothing else left in the desolate room.

"Is it you, Rachel?" said the poor lady, as soon as she saw the seamstress. "Oh, I am so glad you have come back! Oh, see what they've done to me, Rachel! And see what they've done to my poor Charley! They've taken everything we possess in the world, except this miserable bed, and the few rags of clothes! And they would have taken these, too, if the law had let them. But, oh, worse than all, they have dragged off my poor Charley to prison! Yes, they knocked him down when he resisted—knocked him down and dragged him off as if he had been a dog. Oh! Oh! what shall I do?" she exclaimed, bursting into tears, while the children wept aloud.

"You need not be idle, dear Mrs. Faulkner."

"What can I do?" despairingly inquired the young wife.

"You may take steps to-night that may lead to your husband's release to-morrow."

"Oh! tell me how to do that, and I will bless you, Rachel Wood!" exclaimed the poor lady, starting up.

"You can write to your father, and I will take the letter and put it into his own hands. He will not, he cannot, refuse to help you under the present circumstances."

"Yes! yes! yes! I will write to him immediately! Oh, I thank you, Rachel, for your guidance! You are a good pilot to take me through this stormy sea! I will write now—Ah! Heaven! but the wretches have not left me chair or table, or even pen, ink or paper to write with!"

she added in despair, as she glanced around her desolate abode.

"Never mind! We shall improve all this to-morrow. Now come into my room and write your letter," said Rachel, consolingly.

When the letter was finished, Rachel put on her bonnet and shawl and set out with it to Charles street.

The hour was late, and the distance long. So, when she reached the Strand, she called a cab to take her to the West End. She knew that she herself could not possibly afford the outlay of money required to pay for the cab ride; but she also knew that Mrs. Melliss would willingly defray the expenses of her little journey.

After an hour's drive the cab reached Charles street, and drew up before the handsome mansion-house occupied by the wealthy banker.

The seamstress had to proceed cautiously on her errand. She knocked at the servants' door, and asked to see Mary Kempton.

It happened that Mary Kempton was at that moment taking her supper in the housekeeper's room. She soon came to see her visitor.

"I want you to take me to Mrs. Melliss at once, Mary; I have something to say to her," whispered the seamstress.

"Certainly. Come along with me," replied the girl, leading the way upstairs to the second floor, and then to the door of Mrs. Melliss' boudoir.

"Wait a moment here, until I go in and tell her," said Mary, as she passed into the room.

She returned in a few minutes, and told Rachel to go in.

The seamstress went into the room, and found herself alone with the mistress of the mansion.

"My poor Rachel! It must be something very unusual that has brought you all this way at this hour," said the banker's wife, as she arose and shook hands with her humble visitor, and gave her a chair. "I hope you did not walk?"

"No, madam. I came in a cab, and it is waiting for

me at the door," answered the seamstress as she sat down.

"Ah! that is well; I am glad you did. And now your errand, my dear girl, for your face tells me that it is important," said the lady anxiously.

"Yes; it is important, dear Mrs. Melliss. Captain Faulkner has been arrested for debt, and is now in the Queen's Bench. His little personal property has also been seized to satisfy other creditors. I need not describe the deep distress of his wife and little children."

"Good Heaven, Rachel! This is a dreadful piece of news! This must be seen to immediately!" exclaimed Mrs. Melliss.

"It is for that I came. I am the bearer of a letter from Mrs. Faulkner to her father, which I promised to put into his own hands. Will you manage it for me, dear Mrs. Melliss?"

"With great pleasure, Rachel. I would take it to him myself, and back it with my best influence with my husband, but you know what I told you—that I am absolutely forbidden to mention the name of his daughter or his son-in-law in his presence."

"I know that, dear madam."

"But I will take you to him. Come!"

And the lady arose and opened the communicating door between her own boudoir and her husband's reading room.

The banker sat at a table, engaged in writing. But, on seeing his beautiful young wife, he immediately laid aside his pen, and looked up with a welcoming smile.

"Here is Rachel Wood, my seamstress, who wishes to speak with you, dear. Can you see her now?"

"Certainly," said the banker. "Let her come in."

And Rachel Wood entered the room. And Mrs. Melliss retired and closed the door behind her, leaving the seamstress and the banker *tête-à-tête.*

A very anxious half hour passed. Mrs. Melliss could not sit still. She paced restlessly up and down the floor until the door opened, and the banker appeared, followed by the seamstress.

She glanced anxiously from one face to the other, but could learn nothing from their faces; that of the banker seemed perfectly calm, that of the seamstress expectant.

"Angela, my darling, did you know the purport of this letter?" he inquired, showing the missive to her.

"Yes, Walter, dear; Rachel told me what it was about," she answered, trembling.

"Ah! then hear my reply to it," he said. And then he turned to Rachel Wood, and added:

"Take this answer to Mrs. Captain Faulkner. Tell her that if she will consent to separate herself at once and forever from the reprobate she calls her husband, that I will receive her and her children here, and provide for her and for them in a manner becoming their relationship as my daughter and grandchildren. On these conditions, and these only, will I help her. If she accepts them, I will send my carriage to bring her and her children home to-night. If she declines them, I will never lift a finger to help her. I will never see or speak to her again."

"For give me, sir, but I certainly cannot take that message to Mrs. Faulkner," said Rachel, sadly.

"Oh, well, I will answer her letter in writing. You cannot decline to take back a written answer to the letter you brought me?"

"No, sir; certainly I cannot decline to do that. But I entreat you to remember that your daughter is in great trouble, and not to add to that trouble by one unkind word," pleaded Rachel.

"I shall not write to her unkindly," answered the banker, as he sat down to his wife's dainty little writing desk to answer his daughter's letter.

He very soon finished, sealed and directed it.

"Here, Miss Wood, take this to Mrs. Faulkner. And I only hope that she may have the good sense to perceive where her own true interests lie," said the banker, as he handed the letter to the seamstress.

"I shall take it to the poor lady, sir, praying that the Lord may give her light and strength to see and to do her duty," replied Rachel.

"Quite right. Good-night," said Mr. Melliss, as he left the room and withdrew to his study.

Rachel was also about to take leave, but Mrs. Melliss made a sign for her to stay.

Angela Melliss had closely watched the interview between her husband and his daughter's messenger.

And she came to a strange conclusion—that though Mr. Melliss might not, to use his own words, "lift a finger to help" his daughter, except upon the condition that she would leave her shiftless husband, yet he would not be displeased if she, Angela, privately assisted her.

"Else why," inquired the young wife of herself—"why should he hurry away and leave me alone with her messenger, knowing, as well as he does, how much I pity her?"

"It is growing late, dear Mrs. Melliss. If you have anything to say to me——" began Rachel, but she was interrupted by the lady.

"Yes, Rachel, I have something to say to you. And you need not mind about the lateness of the hour. You have a cab, you remember, which, as you engaged it in our service, you must allow me to pay for."

"Thank you, Mrs. Melliss."

"And a part of what I have to say to you is this, Rachel—that from all you have told me of her, I do not think it possible that Mrs. Faulkner will accept the conditions of her father's letter."

"I am sure that she will not, madam."

"But for all that, you must give her the letter."

"I know it!" sighed Rachel.

"But you must not let her despair. You must comfort her to-night. Assure her that her husband shall be released from prison to-morrow. But do not mention my name as a possible benefactress. If she presses to be informed as to who will release her husband from prison, assure her that you are not at liberty to tell her."

"And she will think it is her father helping her secretly, because she believes he cannot venture to do so openly," said Rachel, in a tone of vexation.

"No matter what mistakes she may make for the present. She will know some day," said Mrs. Melliss, with a patient smile.

Then the lady put five sovereigns in the seamstress' hand, saying:

"Take this money, Rachel. Pay your cab fare back to the city, and with the residue supply the immediate wants of that little family."

"Yes, madam. But, ah, to give money to the spendthrift's family does seem like pouring water in a sieve."

"I know it, Rachel; but we must not let the little ones suffer for the sins of their parents. Make them as comfortable as you can, Rachel."

"I will do so, madam."

"And listen, Rachel. If Mrs. Faulkner wishes to go to her husband in prison to-morrow, let her go; encourage her to go, and to spend the day with him. For, look you, Rachel, I shall come to see the little children to-morrow, and for certain reasons I should prefer to visit them in their mother's absence."

"Very well, Mrs. Melliss; I can easily arrange it so that you can do so," answered the seamstress.

And then she took leave of the lady and went away.

Mrs. Faulkner declined absolutely to accede to the terms of the banker's letter—a letter she persisted in believing to have been inspired by "that designing woman," as she styled Mrs. Melliss.

Rachel was sworn to secrecy and dare not undeceive her.

Next day the gambler's wife set out for the prison to talk over the situation with her good-for-nothing husband.

Rachel, who had volunteered to take care of the children, had just sat down, when a knock came to the door, and she rose to greet—not Mrs. Melliss, whom she expected, but the beautiful Duchess of Cheviot.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE HAUNTING FACE AGAIN.

What could have brought the fair partician to this poor neighborhood, and alone and unattended?

Rachel was too much amazed to speak, but she silently placed a chair, which her visitor, with a bow, immediately took.

"I saw you at the hospital yesterday," said the duchess, in a voice low and tremulous with suppressed emotion.

"Yes, madam," answered the seamstress.

"We met there at the bedside of a sick boy—a very fair, interesting child."

"Yes, madam."

"The child is since dead," continued the duchess, and then her voice broke down as she added: "I went there this morning to see him once more. I found his little cot empty. They told me that he had died the evening before."

"Yes, madam, he died soon after you left. He went off without suffering, and very gently. And—it is well," said Rachel Wood.

"Yes, it is well. And yet it is very strange. I cannot help weeping." And here the duchess gave way for a time to her quiet tears, and then resumed:

"I asked to see the little body. But they told me that it had been taken to the dead-house, where there were some cases recently dead of contagious fevers, and advised me not to venture thither. And, of course, on my children's account, I would not run the risk of taking the fever home with me. But I was overcome, Miss Wood; I do not know why."

"It is always very affecting to see children suffer and die," said the seamstress, not well knowing what else to say to her weeping visitor.

"There was a woman present who had also come to see the sick child. Her name was Oaks—no, Pine—

Elm?—what was it?" inquired the duchess of herself, in perplexity.

"It was Juniper, perhaps," suggested Rachel Wood.

"That was it. I remember that it was the name of a tree," said the duchess, smiling through her tears. "It was Juniper. And when I inquired after the friend of the dead boy whom I had seen on the preceding day—meaning yourself, Miss Wood—the nurse could not tell me anything about you. But this woman, Mrs. Juniper, asked a few questions of the nurse as to your personal appearance, and having received satisfactory answers, said at once that your name was Rachel Wood, and that you lived here. I sent my little Alick home in the brougham, and I took a close cab and came hither. And now I suppose you will wonder why I am here."

"I shall at least be very happy to serve your grace in any way that I can," respectfully answered Rachel Wood.

"I came," gravely began the young duchess, "to learn all I can of that child's life from you; who, I am told, have known him from his infancy. Is this true?"

"Yes, madam. I have known little Benny from the time his foster-mother brought him from Scotland," answered Rachel.

"From Scotland!" echoed the duchess, while a strange thrill passed over her frame. But she controlled the emotion which she could not understand, and said, very calmly:

"You wonder, Miss Wood, and, indeed, I also wonder, at the strange and morbid interest I take in this dead child, who was an entire stranger to me. But, in truth, I think I have seen him three times in my life under peculiar circumstances, not easily forgotten," she added, and then fell for a few seconds into a thoughtful pause.

Rachel Wood waited in respectful silence until the lady resumed.

"When I saw the little, pale, patient face lying on the hospital pillow, I did not recognize it at all as one I had ever seen before, though there was something in it, even then, that deeply moved me. But when I went

home and recalled that little face, with its clear complexion, fair flaxen hair, broad brow and blue eyes, its refined features and its look of patient suffering, two other faces came up beside it—one of a babe that I had seen in its mother's arms before St. George's Church on the morning of my marriage, and the other that of a fair street boy whom I saw on Brunswick terrrace, Brighton, on Twelfth-night. I saw both, as I said before, under circumstances not easily forgotten, but which it is not necessary to describe now. But, Miss Wood, when I saw in my mind's eye those three fair, refined, patient, suffering little faces, I knew that they were one and the same. That is all. Now tell me who were this child's parents?"

They are not known, madam. The poor child was a stray. Magdalena Hurst, the woman who brought him up, was his foster-mother," replied Rachel.

"Magdalene Hurst, did you say? It seems to me that there is a faint echo in such a name somewhere in my memory. Did you say Magdelene Hurst?"

"Yes, madam; she was the stewardess on the *Shaft,* plying between London and the western parts of Scotland. She was taken ill one day on the steamer, and was put ashore at Killford."

"Killford!" echoed the duchess.

"Yes, madam; and she was confined there. And it seems that her baby died. And as she had just heard of the sudden death of her husband, the death of her child was concealed from her in mistaken mercy, and this child of unknown parents—this little Benny—was placed in her arms as her own."

"By whom? by whom?" breathlessly inquired the duchess.

"By the attendant physician. It seems that he had brought it only to place it at nurse with this Magdalene Hurst; but, finding the woman in an opium sleep, and hearing from the nurse that her baby was dead, but that the mother did not know it, he bribed and swore the midwife to silence, and then substituted the living child for the dead one, and took away the dead one and buried it."

"That doctor's name? that doctor's name?" gasped the lady, scarcely able to conceal her emotion.

"I do not know it, madam. He was some country practitioner in or near Killford," replied Rachel.

"And is this all you can tell me? Was there no surmise as to the parentage of the child? And how did the woman Hurst discover the fraud that had been practiced upon her?"

"I can answer both your grace's questions in one. When this abandoned child, little Benny, was about twelve months old or so, this woman, Magdalene Hurst, received a message from the midwife who had nursed her through her confinement. The message was brought by a fireman on board the *Shaft,* plying between London and Killford and other western ports. The message was to the effect that Madge should go to Scotland to hear an important secret that the midwife had to confide to her. Madge, having the freedom of the *Shaft* as its old stewardess, went to Killford by the very next trip of the boat. She made her way to the midwife's cottage, where she found the old woman dying——"

"And, of course, heard a deathbed confession," murmured the duchess.

"Yes, madam. Then for the first time Madge learned that her own child was dead and buried, and that some other woman's abandoned babe had been palmed off upon her in its stead."

"By whom?"

"Your grace will please remember that I told you before, by this midwife and the medical attendant, whose name I have forgotten, if indeed I ever even heard it."

"But whose child was this? Had they no knowledge, no, clew, no suspicion?"

"But very slight. The nurse told Madge that the doctor had told her that the substituted babe was the child of a lady of Stirling or of Callender—she had forgotten which—but that the lady had died in her confinement."

As Rachel spoke these last words, the excitement of

her visitor perceptibly subsided, and she more calmly remarked:

"I felt great interest in that poor child. Pray, how did this woman Madge treat the innocent babe left to her uncertain mercy?"

"Very capriciously, madam—fondling or beating him, without any good reason for the one or the other treatment. It is good that he has gone to heaven, madam."

"It is very well," sighed the duchess. "But did this woman throw him off at length?"

"Oh, no, madam. With all her faults, she would never have done that, I think."

"Where is she, then? She might be able to tell me more."

"Ah! madam, do you not remember that celebrated trial of the woman who strangled her rival to death, but was acquitted of murder on the plea of insanity?"

"Certainly I do; but that woman's name was Brice."

"It is the same, your grace. Magdalene Hurst married, as her second husband, a man by the name of Brice, who was not very faithful to her. She stranged her rival in a fit of insanity. And now she is a lifelong prisoner in the Asylum for Criminal Lunatics, and, although her insanity was a very doubtful matter at the time of her imprisonment, it is a very certain one now. She is hopelessly mad."

"Poor creature! Then there is nothing to be learned from her."

"There was nothing to be learned from her on that subject even before her madness—at least, nothing more than I have told you. Madge, as soon as she had heard the secret told her by the dying woman, made the most particular inquiries in the village and in the neighborhood, but could discover nothing more, not even the register of her child's death, or the place of its burial. She was only laughed at for her credulity in believing the nurse's story, which was set down as the hallucination of a decaying brain."

"But the doctor—the doctor who had attended her,

and who had practiced this fraud upon her—could she not have found him?"

"The doctor had been dead for months," answered Rachel, gravely.

"The doctor dead!" echoed the duchess, in a strange low tone.

"Yes the doctor had died and made no sign," continued Rachel.

"Perhaps he made a sign, though not a very clear one," murmured the duchess, as she remembered the strange incidents of Dr. Seton's deathbed.

Her voice did not this time reach the seamstress' ears.

"And so she never gained a clew to the parentage of the child?"

"No, madam; the secret seemed to have died with the doctor who attended the woman."

"And that is all?"

"That is all, except this trifling incident—that the woman found in the nurse's hut an elegant little embroidered sack and sock that could not have been made for any but an infant of rank."

"Where are those relics?"

"It would be hard to tell. After Madge came back from Scotland with the infant she very carefully preserved those little garments, believing that some day they might lead to the discovery of the child's parents and also help to identify the child himself. But whatever became of them in the confusion that followed the murder of the ballet girl and the arrest of Madge I do not know. When Madge was sent to the Criminal Lunatic Asylum her husband was in prison. As soon as he got out he came here and sold off everything, and went, it is supposed, to America."

"Miss Wood, I wish you would tell me what in the meantime, became of the unfortunate boy."

"He was taken away to Brighton by the old mother of Madge. And I lost sight of him for some time—until, indeed, I found him ill of the fever in which he was taken to the hospital, where your grace also saw him."

"He is the same boy I have seen at intervals three times, and whose face haunts me like a spirit. Miss Wood, would it trouble you too much to give me a detailed account of that poor child's life as you have witnessed it?"

"Not at all, your grace. I will willingly tell you all I know."

And Rachel related the London life of little Benny as far as she was acquainted with it.

The duchess shed tears over the sad story, and at its close she thanked the narrator and arose and took leave.

She drew her thick veil over her face and went downstairs and entered the close carriage that was waiting for her below.

She gave the order to the cabman to drive her to "Very's," where she had directed her own brougham to meet her.

And then she sank back in her seat and burst into tears and wept passionately, thinking all the while:

"My first-born child is dead. And this child, that my heart so yearns over, is also dead. It is well. It is well, I suppose; and yet, oh, oh! I have that on my mind that must forever impair its peace!"

So sighing, and mourning over her vague suspicions of the truth, poor little Benny's beautiful mother went back to her palace home, leaving him——

Where?

In the deadhouse of the Middlesex Hospital?

No. It is not every body carried into the deadhouse that remains there until it is carried to its grave.

Little Benny lay stretched out upon the "cooling board" in the same room with two other bodies.

He lay there all night, and until nearly noon of the next day.

Then the undertaker came to put the bodies in their coffins.

He placed two in their last narrow cradles, and then lifted little Benny's light form, but immediately let it down again, whispering in a scared tone of voice to his assistant:

"Hallo, Bill, hold hard! I'm blowed if we wa'n't just agwine to bury this shaver alive!"

"What?" asked the other, under his breath.

"This one's alive, I tell you! He's warm. I'm blest if he ain't in a prespuration under his armpits," added the man, as he pursued his investigations.

"Then we'd better not nail him down in the coffin, I'm thinking," remarked the other, gazing curiously at the subject.

"Nail him down in the coffin, you born fool! Nail the live boy down in the coffin, even 'sposin' he is a pauper?"

"Well, I wa'n't a saying we'd do it; I was saying as we'd better not."

"I should think so, unless we'd like to be scragged for murder."

"Then what will we do at all?"

"Go call the doctor, and he'll tell you."

The undertaker's man went in search of the physician in charge; but that gentleman could not be found.

An assistant surgeon, however, came to the dead-house, examined the subject, decided that "it was not a corpse, but a patient," and ordered him to be taken immediately back to his bed, where we must leave him for the present.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE GOOD FAIRY'S WAND.

After the beautiful young duchess had left her, Rachel Wood sat sewing on the everlasting "shirt," and thinking on all that had just passed, until a sharp knock at her room door aroused her.

She arose to admit the visitor, and with more pleasure than surprise she met the sweet face of Angela Melliss smiling on her.

"Well, Rachel, dear, I am here at last. How are the children?" she inquired, as she entered the humble apartment of the seamstress.

"The children are quite well, Mrs. Melliss," answered Rachel.

And she arose and led the way across the hall to the room occupied by the Faulkners.

As she opened the door Angela Melliss shrank back suddenly, surprised and repelled by the aspect of the place.

"A chamber of desolation," indeed it was.

The floor, from which the carpet had been rudely torn, was left covered half-inch thick with dust.

Piles of shabby clothing, thrown out of bureaus and boxes that had been seized, lay about the one poor mattress that had been left there.

And on this mattress the children were playing at throwing pillows over each other.

The children stopped at the sight of the lady.

The little six-year-old woman Mary whispered:

"You must be good now. There are visitors."

"It's only Fay Dammer! She won't mind," said little Lily, scrambling out of the confusion of bedclothes and the cloud of dust, and running up to greet her friend.

"My poor darling!" murmured Mrs. Melliss, instinctively shrinking from contact with the dusty child, but immediately recovering, and caressing the little golden-haired head.

"Oh! what a sight, Rachel! Their mother, I suppose, has gone to visit her imprisoned husband."

"Yes, madam!"

"I hope she will not be likely to come home soon. I wish to do a great deal before she comes."

And a great deal it truly was, for Mrs. Melliss had brought sundry packages of clothing with her, and as soon as the children were washed they were arrayed in their new garments, then placed in a cab and driven out over Waterloo Bridge to a charming cottage at Sydenham.

A lovely little miniature villa it was!

They entered a hall, on each side of which were stained glass doors, leading into the drawing-room, dining-room, sitting-room and library, on the first floor.

Opposite the front door, and at the back of the hall, was a French window glazed with stained glass, and now open, and revealing a flight of steps leading into the garden below.

The housekeeper or caretaker of the premises, turning back to Mrs. Melliss, said:

"Wouldn't you like to take the little ones upstairs to the bedrooms, ma'am, to lay off their bonnets before they have luncheon?"

"Yes, certainly," said Mrs. Melliss, and, assisted by Rachel Wood and Mary Kempton, she took the children upstairs into one of the fresh, fragrant, white-draped bedrooms to prepare them for their repast.

"Oh! what a lovely, lovely place! Oh, an't this a holiday!" exclaimed Master Charley.

And all the children chimed in with his notes of admiration.

When they had sufficiently admired the white enameled chamber furniture, and the white curtained windows, with bird cages hung between the folds of the curtains, and all the pretty objects about the suburban cottage, they willingly followed their fairy grandmother and her attendants to the rooms below.

There new delights awaited them. They were shown the pretty drawing-room, with its pale blue damask and silver hangings and covers, and its delicate lace curtains; and the cozy parlor, with its dark green furniture; and the library, with its pictures and busts, and with its bookcases, not yet filled, and its tables adorned with a few fine illustrated volumes.

And then they were taken into the neat, clean, cool dining-room, with its nicely-set luncheon-table.

"Oh! this is a holiday! you bet!" said Master Charley.

"It must have cost a deal of money," said grave Miss Mary.

"It an't polite to talk about tost, Mary. Papa always says so," put in Miss Ada.

"And now, here is our luncheon all ready, my children. So we will gather around the table and take it," said Mrs. Melliss.

And, assisted by Mary and Rachel, she placed all the little ones at the well-spread table, and afterward helped them to dainties to which, poor children! they were very little accustomed; for to their familiar bread and butter were added broiled spring chicken, lettuce, radishes, cheese, cream cakes and sweetmeats.

When the children had finished their repast, little Lily, the irrepressible and demonstrative, came up to her fairy grandmother's side, and whispered:

"Fay dammer, I want to ast you somefin'."

"Ask what you please, my darling."

"May us do and p'ay in de darden?"

"Yes, love; go and play in the garden as much as you please."

"Tome along, tildern!" called the little leader of three years old, as she ran out through the open French window at the back of the hall.

Her brothers and sisters followed her with shouts of joy, and disappeared among the shrubbery of the garden below.

The children had scarcely left the house before a "hansom" pulled up at the front gate, and a young gentleman alighted from it.

Mrs. Melliss went down the garden walk to receive him; for he was no other than her stepson, Mr. Percy Melliss, barrister, come there to meet her by appointment.

"Well, my dear Percy, how have you sped?" inquired his stepmother. "But come into the house and sit down, before you tell me," she added, leading the way into the cottage.

When both were seated in the pretty blue and white drawing-room, she asked him again:

"How have you sped in your mission, dearest Percy?"

"Thanks to your munificence, sweet mother, I sped as people speed who have their pockets full of money," answered the young man, with a smile.

"Well?"

"I have bought up all the outstanding claims against that poor man, as far as I could ascertain them, and now, as your agent, I am his only creditor. And as

you are the most interested in this matter, I wait your orders to release him."

"Thanks, good son. But now, about his release, and his removal hither, there is a little awkwardness. That poor, man with all his sins and follies and weakness and helplessness, is just as proud as Lucifer. Whoever may help him or his family will have to do it very discreetly. He would see his wife and children in the almshouse before ever he would come here and accept this home at my hands. Dear Percy, I am in a quandery. The children are all here so comfortable and happy that they think themselves in fairy land or Paradise. But how to get the father and mother here without wounding their pride I do not know."

"Good little angel mamma, do not distress yourself. The haughty gentleman and gallant officer, Captain Faulkner, has a saving faith in a comfortable home, so that you will give it to him, as it were, without his knowledge and consent. Dear, honest little mother, all you have to do is to give it to him through his wife. He will know all the while that it is a gift of charity; but then he will not feel obliged to know it, or to acknowledge it, even to himself."

"I see! Oh, how clever you are, Percy, dear! You'll sit upon the woolsack one of these days."

"Then it will be by cleverness, not by honesty or intellect," answered the young lawyer, with a bitter-sweet smile.

"Well, now, of course, you have matured the whole matter. Now, how are you going to act? through his wife?"

"My fair mother, it is you who will have to act."

"How?"

"You must either go yourself——"

"That will not do."

"Or send some reliable messenger to the wife, to put her in possession of the whole, or of as much of the facts as you may deem advisable. She will know how to deal with her husband, and to save his—most ridiculous—self-esteem."

"Rachel Wood! I will send Rachel Wood! She will

know exactly what to say and do. She has a great deal more sense than I have."

"I would knock any man down, and stand an action for assault and battery, who should dare to hint that any living creature had half the brain and heart of my fair young mother!" said the stepson, with enthusiasm.

"I am glad that the opportunity will not be afforded you, dear Percy; for your little mother's name is not likely to be so discussed," said Mrs. Melliss gravely.

Her stepson bowed silently to the rebuff.

"And now, dear Percy, I will go and call Rachel Wood, and instruct her in that part she is to play."

"Do so, *belle mere;* but do not forget that these Faulkners are not half so much averse to being assisted as your own pure heart gives them credit for being."

Mrs. Melliss went into the dining-room, where she had left Rachel Wood and Mary Kempton, lunching at the second table.

She found them loitering in the bay window, as if not exactly knowing what they were next expected to do with themselves, and half inclined to join the children in the garden.

"Rachel, I want you. Come here," said the lady.

And the girl quickly joined her.

The lady took the seamstress up into one of the fresh, fragrant bedchambers.

When they were seated Mrs. Melliss unfolded her plans for inducing the "haughty" Captain Faulkner to be so obliging as to accept—what, indeed, the beggared spendthrift might well consider the most unmerited blessing of his life—a comfortable home for himself and his family.

Rachel Wood, with ready wit, quickly comprehended the case, and agreed to take the part assigned to her.

Mrs. Melliss then sent a messenger to the hotel to recall the cab she had left there.

And in half an hour afterward Rachel Wood was on her way to London.

She reached the debtor's prison a few minutes before the closing of the gates.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A GLAD END.

As Rachel Wood's cab drew up before the gloomy doors, she noticed a "hansom" there, with Mr. Percy Melliss and another person seated in it.

She had chanced to see the young barrister several times since that memorable day when he defended Madge Brice with such success.

She therefore recognized him immediately.

"Ah, Miss Rachel, is that you? You come from Mrs. Melliss. My fair stepmother has been prompt," said the young gentleman, as he alighted and handed Rachel Wood out of her cab, and led her up to the prison door.

Rachel thanked him while they stood waiting to be admitted.

"You have my mother's instructions, I think?" he said.

"Yes, sir," she answered.

"Then I have only to add that, for certain family reasons, I do not wish to appear in this matter any more than does my stepmother. You will, therefore, if you please, Miss Rachel, avoid all mention of my name, as well as of hers," said Mr. Percy Melliss.

"Certainly, sir. I understand that," replied Rachel.

"The man in the cab there will attend to all the necessary formalities involved in the releasing of Captain Faulkner from prison. You will do the rest.

"Yes, sir."

"Then that is settled. Now then——" said the young man, as the sound of the opening of doors was heard. Bolts were drawn, keys were turned, chains fell with a loud clang, and the way stood free.

Mr. Percy Melliss led Rachel Wood in, and said to one of the officers of the prison:

"Show me into the office, and then take this young person where she can have an interview with Mrs. Faulkner, who is now with her husband, the prisoner, Captain Faulkner."

The man threw open a door on the left, and admitted Mr. Percy to the office of the prison.

And then he led the way to a door on the opposite side of the hall, and showed Rachel Wood into a small, plainly furnished waiting-room, where he told her she could wait for her friend.

And then he went away to fetch the prisoner's wife.

Rachel had long to wait—three-quarters of an hour, that seemed to her like three whole hours.

Then the door was opened, and Mrs. Faulkner, dressed to go out, entered, walked rapidly across the room, threw her arms around Rachel Wood's neck, and burst into tears, exclaiming eagerly:

"Oh, Rachel! Rachel! It is true! it is true! It has happened as you said it would. My poor, dear Charley's debts are paid, and he is released from durance 'by some unknown friend!' Ah, well I know who that unknown friend is. My dear papa! my poor papa! Ah, I hope my base and cruel stepmother won't find out what he has been secretly doing for me, and tear his eyes out for it! Do you think she will, Rachel?"

"I think," replied Rachel, "that you do your father's young wife bitter injustice, and that you will some day acknowledge this with sorrow and shame. This is all I am at liberty to say, Mrs. Faulkner."

"Oh, I forgot! You are a partisan of young Mrs. Melliss. You have fallen under the spell of her fascinations. When you know as much about her as I unhappily do, you will not be so enthusiastic in your praise."

"Do you know anything at all about that lady, Mrs. Faulkner?"

"I should think I did! I know that she was a mercenary, low adventuress, who married my dear father for his money, and then made fatal mischief between him and his only daughter," said the poor lady, bitterly.

"Ah! well, time will show," sighed Rachel Wood. "But now, Mrs. Faulkner, we must leave this place. I have a cab waiting at the door to take you away," she added.

"To leave this place! Ah, yes; thank Heaven, we may leave this place! My poor Charley, as soon as he found he was free, and with a ten-pound note in his pocket, sent out for a barber to shave and trim him up, and for a gentleman's outfitter to furnish him with a complete change of clothes. My dear Charley is so fastidious as to his personal appearance! He never would show himself in the streets with soiled linen, and with a beard of two days' growth. We must wait for him here for a few minutes. He won't keep us long."

Rachel Wood shrugged her shoulders.

Two habits of pretty little helpless Mollie Faulkner tried Rachel Wood's patience severely. The first was her absurd admiration for her good-for-nothing husband; and the second was her unjust hatred of her lovely young stepmother.

As yet Rachel had not had time to explain to Mrs. Faulkner the happy change of circumstances that were before her.

She was hesitating how to begin, when Mollie herself made an opening by saying:

"Oh, good Heaven! in my delight at my dear Charley's release from prison, I had quite forgotten the desolation of our home! Ah, Heaven, what a wretched place to go back to!"

"My dear Mrs. Faulkner," said Rachel, cautiously, "the same kind hand that paid your husband's debts has provided new lodgings for you. Your children are already there. And I am here with a cab to take you to them, if you will consent to go there."

"Consent? Oh, Rachel! what choice have I? Of course, I consent willingly, joyfully! New furnished lodgings, did you say? Where are they Rachel?" eagerly inquired Mollie.

"They are out of town a little way."

"Out of town? Oh, I am so glad of that! That is for cheapness, I suppose, of course. But I do not care how cheap and poor and plain they are, so that my children may have fresh air, and my poor, dear Charley may be kept away from temptation."

While she spoke the door was noisily opened, and

Captain Faulkner came bustling in, looking clean, fresh, strong and handsome.

He bowed slightly to Rachel Wood, and then hurriedly addressed his wife.

"Well, Mollie, are you ready to go? They are about to shut up here."

"Yes, Charlie dear, quite ready; only waiting for you."

"Come on, then. And a deuce of a place we have got to go to! Bare walls and bare floors; bare cupboards and bare wardrobes!" he growled.

"No, no, dear Charley; not so bare as all that! Our neighbor of the old tenement-house, Miss Rachel Wood, has been so lucky as to find furnished lodgings for us, a little way out of town. But you won't mind that, Charley, dear, will you, for a little while?"

"No; any place will do for a few days. And a poor place enough it is, without any doubt," he added, in a low tone, not to be uncivil to Rachel Wood, whom he supposed, or affected to suppose, to be his wife's agent and messenger in the engagement of these lodgings.

Mollie tied her bonnet strings, drew her shawl around her and arose and slipped her arm in her husband's.

And then they went to the outer door of the prison, where, after more unlocking, unbolting and falling of bars and chains, the door was opened, and they found themselves outside the prison walls.

"I must find a cab," said the captain.

"No indeed, Charley, dear. Rachel has brought one. There it is, I suspect, around the corner," said Mollie.

"Yes, that is it," said Rachel, and she beckoned the cabman to drive up.

Captain Faulkner handed his wife and the seamstress into the cab, and was about to follow them in, when he paused, hesitated, considered, and then said:

"You'd better give me the address of the new lodgings, Mollie, and let me follow you later in the evening. There's a man in town I want to see."

"Oh, Charley! can't you come now?" entreated the young wife.

"No, dear; but I'll not be an hour behind you."

"Oh, Charley!" she said, with such a look of disappointment and apprehension on her face that for once the better nature of the man was awakened. He laughed and said:

"I know exactly what you are afraid of, dear. But I will set your fears at rest. Here is my pocketbook. It contains just four pounds seven shillings and ninepence, all the money I have in the world. Take it and keep it for me," he added, taking it and putting it into her hand.

"Oh, Charley, dear, since you promise me, I can take your word," she said, gently putting back the book.

"You'd better take the pocketbook also," he said, with a laugh.

"But how, then, will you manage to get out to the new lodgings?"

"Oh, I will call a hansom and pay it at the door when I get home. There! it's all right, my dear. Go on, driver!" he said, closing the door, and putting into his pocket the written address of the new lodgings that Rachel had given him.

"Oh, Rachel Wood, isn't he an angel?" warmly inquired Mollie, as the cab drove on.

"I confess that I begin to have hopes that he may become a man," answered the seamstress.

"Oh, you don't know him! If only he could keep out of the way of that horrid set, he would always be just as good as he is to-day," said the credulous wife, ignorant or forgetful that her husband was himself one of the very worst of that "horrid" set that she supposed to be his tempters.

The carriage rolled rapidly on, and Mollie babbled about her favorite subjects—the excellence of her husband, the wickedness of her stepmother, and the weakness of her father—until the carriage passed through Kennington.

Then Mollie left off talking to look out and enjoy the rare vision of green hedges, shady lanes and flower-gardens near, and vistas of fields and woods and streams farther off.

At length the carriage passed through Brixton, through Lower and Upper Norwood, and on to Sydenham.

"Why, how far you are taking me! Quite out into the country!" said Mollie, with increasing surprise.

"We have not far to go now," answered Rachel.

And the carriage turned into a deeply-shaded green lane that led directly up to a pretty rustic cottage, completely enbosomed among trees, and overgrown with climbing vines.

A group of gayly-dressed and merry children were playing under the trees in front of the cottage.

"Oh, what happy-looking little ones they are! I wonder who lives here, Rachel?" suddenly exclaimed Mollie, as this beautiful scene burst upon her sight.

"Look closer," was all that the seamstress answered.

"Heaven of Heavens! they are my own children!" exclaimed Mollie, after a second look. "My own children, so handsomely dressed, and so happily at play! Oh, Rachel! And this is their lovely home! Oh, it is too much joy! My dear father! Oh, my dear, dear father! how I thank him and bless him for this!"

Tears sprang to Rachel Wood's eyes, as she noticed among the children a slender figure in a black tweed cloak and hood, gliding away to the deeper shadows of the trees.

She knew the lovely young giver of all this good was hastening away to conceal herself from her stepdaughter.

The cab drew up before the gate, and Mrs. Faulkner and Rachel alighted.

The children, instantly recognizing their mother, ran with joy to meet her, and began with clamorous delight to tell her all about the wonders and beauties of their lovely new cottage home.

So, talking and laughing and dancing with joy, they drew their mother into the house and into the pretty drawing-room, where the elder boy and girl united their little strength to pull the large easy-chair toward her, and the younger pushed her into it.

Utterly overcome with emotion, poor Mollie sank into the chair and drew her children to her bosom.

Then Rachel Wood, finding herself forgotten by the happy family, seized the opportunity to slip out of the room and to go and look for Mrs. Melliss.

She found that lady walking under the trees.

"I have been waiting here to receive your report, Rachel," she said, coming to meet the seamstress.

In a very few words Rachel Wood told Mrs. Melliss all that had passed at the prison, and about Captain Faulkner's prudent precaution in handing over his pocketbook to his wife for safekeeping while he himself remained for a few hours in the city.

"That looks as if the man really meant reform, Rachel. And if he does, and if his well-meaning ends in well-doing I shall have very strong hopes that his father-in-law may yet become reconciled to him," said Mrs. Melliss.

"Heaven grant it!" sighed Rachel Wood. "But, my dear Mrs. Melliss," she continued, "they are all under the false impression that it is you who keeps up the feud between the father and daughter. And that makes Mrs. Faulkner so unjust in her thoughts and speeches about you that it is very hard for me to be obliged to hear it all in silence. Oh, if you would only give me leave to speak!"

"No, Rachel, no! Not quite yet. It would not be wise or prudent to do so. Some of these days they will all know how much I have cared for them," said the banker's young wife, smiling to herself.

"Yes, they will know that the hated stepmother and the beneficent fairy grandmother are one and the same," added Rachel.

"Well, Rachel, I have seen their happiness, and now I am going home. But first may I ask you to do me another favor?"

"You may command me to do anything in the world you wish me to do, dear Mrs. Melliss," earnestly answered Rachel Wood, whose reverence for this lady almost amounted to worship.

"Thanks, dear Rachel. I will only ask you, then, to

remain here for an hour or two after I have gone, to induct the young housekeeper into her new home. And then come to Charles street to report progress. Can you do this?"

"Certainly I can, madam. And I will do so with great pleasure," said Rachel, earnestly.

"Thanks again, Rachel; you are a good, unselfish girl. I will call and leave word at the Family Hotel for them to send a cab around, say at eight o'clock, for you. Will that do?"

"Quite well, thank you, Mrs. Melliss."

"Good-by, then, for the present," said the lady.

And she entered her cab where Mary Kempton, by her mistress' directions, was already seated.

"Back to town," was the order she gave the cabman, who touched his hat and drove off.

Rachel Wood, with affectionate interest, watched the cab out of sight, and then went in and rejoined the happy little family.

CHAPTER XL.

MOLLIE'S MISGIVINGS.

But already a cloud had come over the clearness of their joy—a cloud, though it was no darker or heavier than the light summer mist that tempers the brightness of the noonday sun. The cloud was on the young mother's brow.

"Ah, Rachel, you didn't go away in the cab? I am so glad! I wanted to talk with you, and to know more about all this," she said, as she saw the seamstress.

"I am here on purpose to satisfy you, Mrs. Faulkner," answered Rachel.

"Run out, children, and play in the garden—the beautiful garden," whispered their mother. And when the little flock had flown out among the flowers, she turned to the seamstress and said:

"Ah, well, my dear woman, this is what I wanted to

say. It is all very beautiful and delightful here, Rachel; but it may be all a fool's paradise, after all! How on earth are we to keep it up, Rachel, when poor Charley is doing nothing and getting nothing? How are we to keep this up?"

"Dear Mrs. Faulkner, set your mind at ease on this subject. The first quarter's rent for this cottage has been paid in advance——"

"The first quarter's rent for the cottage! You don't mean to say we have got the whole cottage to ourselves?"

"Indeed, I do, ma'am, and there are eight rooms."

"Oh, that is perfectly delightful! Oh, how long it has been since we have had a whole house to ourselves! But will this last? Oh, will this—can this last?"

"I hope so, Mrs. Faulkner. I see no reason why it should not. I was about to explain to you, when you interrupted me, that the first quarter's rent of your new house is already paid in advance, by the same kind friend who has cared for you from the beginning of your troubles. This kind friend——"

"Why can you not say my dear father at once? For you know that I know he is my secret benefactor," again interrupted Mollie.

"You are mistaken," said Rachel, coldly.

"Oh, well—keep the secret, if you must. But remember that I know, whoever may be the medium of my dear father's beneficence to me, he and he only, is the source of it. And now go on," said the obstinate little lady.

And the provoked seamstress controlled her temper and went on to say:

"This friend will continue to pay the rent quarterly in advance. And will also from time to time send in all manner of family provisions, so as to keep the house well stocked with every sort of comfort."

"But why can't this friend send the money to my husband that he may provide for the family?" testily inquired the little lady.

As she spoke the doorbell rang.

Rachel herself went and opened the door, and admitted the master of the house.

But Mollie was quickly behind her.

"So you kept your word, Charley, you dear, good fellow! Come right into the drawing-room. Oh! this is such a delicious place, Charley! You will like it so much! Papa has engaged it for us! He's coming round, all right, Charley, dear. Only give him time! There—that's right! Hang up your hat and come right in!" she eagerly exclaimed, pulling her husband into the pretty drawing-room, and shoving him down into the easiest resting-chair, very much as the children had pulled and shoved her an hour before.

"Oh, see here! you know——" cried the gallant captain, looking about him, "I say, you know! this is coming it rather strong, isn't it, Mollie? Has any one left you a legacy? or what's up, that I find you in this miniature palace?"

"Oh, Charley, haven't I just told you that dear papa has taken this house for us, and paid the rent in advance also? And that he means to do a handsome part by us, though he don't wish to be known in it just now. That's on account of my cruel stepmother, you know!" explained Mollie.

"Whe-ew-ew!" commented the captain, with a long whistle.

The children came rushing in to greet their father.

They welcomed him as if he had been the best father in the world. They climbed on his knee, they hugged and kissed him, and they deafened him with accounts of their beautiful new home, and of the good fairy grandmother who had given it to them.

"Who, what fairy grandmother?" inquired their father.

"Oh! some woman whom dear papa has employed as his agent, for a blind, you know, Charley, dear. She told the children she was their fairy grandmother," Mollie explained.

"Humph!" commented the captain.

"And now, Charley, while they are putting supper on the table, we will go and look over the house. Do

you know I haven't seen it yet, except this room? I waited for you to come, that we might see it first in company," said Mollie, putting the children aside and rising to lead the way.

With a grunt of assent the captain followed her.

They crossed the little hall, with its little stained glass window, and inspected the cozy front sitting-room and the back dining-room. And then they went upstairs and looked into the large bedchamber over the drawing-room, with the small dressing-room at the back.

"This is to be our own room, of course, Charley. And the children will occupy the room on the other side of the hall, over the front parlor; and the two servant-girls will sleep in the back room, over the dining-room. Don't you think that a good arrangement?"

"Humph! I suppose so. But how is this business to be managed, Mollie?"

"Oh, papa will see to that. Not quite in the way we would wish, just at first, Charley; for I think he is putting us on a sort of probation, you see, Charley. And that is the reason, I think, why he will not himself be seen in it. But you won't mind his trying us in this way, just a little at first, Charley, dear, will you? He'll come right all in good time," said Mollie, anxiously.

The captain burst out laughing, and said:

"I don't care a copper how the deuce the old quiz does it, so that he makes you and the children comfortable, as he ought, for you are his only daughter, and they are his only set of grandchildren."

"That's right, Charley. Now come; we will only just glance into the children's room, and then go down to supper," said his wife.

And she opened the door on the opposite side of the hall and showed a glimpse of a pretty chamber, with windows shaded with climbing green vines without, and draped with thin white muslin within, and fitted up with furniture covered with white dimity.

"Isn't that a sweet room for the little ones?" inquired Mollie.

The captain assented, with another grunt, and then followed his wife downstairs.

They found Rachel Wood standing in the hall, dressed to go out.

"Not going yet, Rachel?" inquired Mollie.

"Yes, ma'am. The cab is waiting to take me back to town. And the drive is a long one," replied the seamstress.

Mollie had pressed her to stay to supper, but Rachel resolutely declined to do so.

She took leave of the parents and children, and turned to go.

"Div lots and lots of love and tisses to fay dammer," said little Lily.

And all the other children joined her in sending this sweet, childish message.

Rachel Wood promised all they wished, and then she left them.

Captain and Mrs. Faulkner, and their children, enjoyed some weeks of unbroken happiness in their beautiful little rustic house.

The refreshing change from the unwholesome street and wretched tenement house to the beautiful country neighborhood and the clean, well-furnished cottage, was enjoyed by them all—even by the husband and father, despite his perverted tastes.

For, notwithstanding his passion for wine, cards and evil companions, he was naturally very fond of his pretty young wife and his fair little children.

He had been very fond of them, even when extreme poverty had made them all uncleanly, ill-clothed and irritable, and when their very existence seemed a bitter reproach to himself.

And now that they were all clean, well-dressed, happy and smiling, he really delighted in them, and in their beautiful home.

Here, too, the expected babe—their sixth child—was born. It was a boy, and named by his mother Walter Melliss, after her father.

And, besides his natural affection for wife, children and home, Captain Faulkner had two other saving at-

tributes, if only he would cultivate them—a taste for horticulture and a taste for literature.

Now he had an opportunity of gratifying both.

Nearly all day long he was in his garden, at work among his flowers, fruits and vegetables, with his flock of little children at his heels, and his wife sitting, with her needlework, in the arbor.

Or, if it rained, he would go to the little apartment at the back of the drawing-room, which he had fitted up for a study, and read books on horticulture, borrowed from a neighboring library, or he would write articles on the same grand subject and send them to the papers. These articles were occasionally accepted, and well paid for.

Thus occupied with his wife, children, home and hobby, the half-reformed spendthrift seemed safe and happy.

He never seemed to wish to go to town, or to seek out his late evil companions. It may well have been that he was afraid of being found out by them, and tempted again into the downward road.

As for poor Mollie, she seemed to think her dear Charley was growing into an angel in downright earnest.

Would this happy state last? Who could tell?

At any rate, it lasted some weeks, when, late in the summer, Captain Faulkner took it into his head that he must have "a boy" to wait on him, that, in fact, "a boy" was indispensable to his comfort.

"You know, Mollie," he said, "it is absolutely necessary that I should have some one to brush my coat and black my boots and run my errands."

"Of course it is, Charley, dear," assented Mollie, who would have assented to anything in the world her paragon might please to propose. "Of course you must have a servant of your own. I only wonder how you have managed to do without one this long!"

"Well, it is not much of a servant that I shall be able to keep, you know. Only a boy—one that I can have authority enough over to train him in my own ways. And now I think of it, I will go and see if I can't find

one to suit me at the Middlesex Workhouse. If I can I will have him bound to me, and then he will be mine to do as I please with. If I were not a Briton, Mollie, I would say that the next best thing to having a slave of one's own is to have a bound boy of one's own. Don't you think so?"

"I—I never thought about that at all; but, of course, you must be right, Charley, dear," assented Mollie.

"Then I'll go and brush my coat and black my boots for the last time, and get ready to ride to town. And, Mollie, dear, here are my best gloves with all the finger ends blowing out, like the leaves of my favorite flowers. Just mend them for me, will you?"

And he went off, leaving his little wife a good half-hour's work.

She had nearly completed the task when he came in, all ready for his ride, and in a hurry for his gloves.

"Charley, dear," she pleaded, as she gave them to him, "I want to ask you one favor, if you won't mind."

"Ask away, Mollie."

"This is the first time you have left me to go into town since we have been living so happily here. Oh, Charley, promise me you won't go near any of that horrid set!"

"If I should see one of them, I will run from him as if he were a mad dog!" answered the captain, laughing good-humoredly.

"That's a dear fellow!" she exclaimed, kissing him.

And so the captain went away to find "a boy" who should be the "next best thing to a slave" of his own.

Meantime Mollie anxiously awaited his return, and earnestly hoped that he would keep his promise.

The day seemed very long to her uneasy heart, but it passed at length, as the longest day does.

Mollie heard the whistle of the "parliamentary" train from London, and went out to the gate to watch for her husband, whom she expected would return by that one, and walk from the station.

She waited about ten minutes, and then she saw him and a small lad turn into the lane leading up to the cottage.

"Thank Heaven!" she fervently breathed; for, by his very step and bearing, as he rapidly approached, she saw that he had kept his promise to her.

In another minute he was at the gate, and she threw her arms around his neck and welcomed him home as joyfully as if he had just returned from a long and dangerous voyage.

But then, you see, she knew how much danger he really had been in.

He laughed and kissed her, as he said:

"Come into the house. I want you to look at my new boy."

"And I want you to come to tea. It is quite ready," she answered, as she led the way into the cottage.

There, in the full light of the parlor, Mollie turned to see the bound boy.

He was a fair-skinned, blue-eyed, golden-haired lad, with very delicate features and a very refined countenance.

It was no other than little Benny, who had been literally snatched from the grave, and whose further adventures will be chronicled in the sequel to this story, entitled, "A Noble Lord," published uniform with this volume.

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In point of publication, "Darnley" is that work by Mr. James which follows "Richelieu," and, if rumor can be credited, it was owing to the advice and insistence of our own Washington Irving that we are indebted primarily for the story, the young author questioning whether he could properly paint the difference in the characters of the two great cardinals. And it is not surprising that James should have hesitated; he had been eminently successful in giving to the world the portrait of Richelieu as a man, and by attempting a similar task with Wolsey as the theme, was much like tempting fortune. Irving insisted that "Darnley" came naturally in sequence, and this opinion being supported by Sir Walter Scott, the author set about the work.

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